BING

Winter
2016

No. 174

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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Bing Crosby Enterprises: www.BingCrosby.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326
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All remittances should be sent to Michael Crampton in **£ sterling** payable to *The International Club Crosby* with the exception of::

(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins

(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

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EDITORIAL

Well, it's still me in the Editor's chair as a replacement has not been found. I now have to make a hard choice. Ideally I wanted a younger person with more expertise in magazine layout and journalism who would be able to work cordially with Bing Crosby Enterprises in the future. However it is clear that if the magazine is not published, the ICC will become website based only which will not suit many of our members and it will inevitably hasten our demise as a club. **I can't let that happen.** I have had so many nice letters and emails that it has made me feel very guilty indeed about resigning. Also, I cannot let down the many members who have made special donations to keep us going

So, in view of this, I have agreed to carry on as long as the members want me and I hope this will be welcomed. It would be lovely if members would show their support by paying their annual dues / subscription as soon as they read this to save our hard-working volunteers having to send out reminders which is, of course, costly to the club apart from taking up a lot of Wig and Michael's time.

Unfortunately, Wig suffered an accident in October which left him with a fractured left leg at the ankle in two places. Surgery was then necessary and Wig is currently in a rehab facility as I write. Hopefully he will be home by the time you are reading this and he will still be dealing with the collection of members' dues and other club matters. Perry Huntoon will handle the actual distribution of the USA magazines with Scott Payne looking after the Canadian copies. Our sincere thanks are due to Perry and Scott for undertaking this task.

The contributions of Anton Garcia-Fernandez to our last issue were universally welcomed but unfortunately work pressures have meant that the article he was working on for this edition is not ready and it will therefore be included in the spring 2017 magazine.

The sad news of the death of Jim Reilly who did so much for the club over many years was received in August and Michael Crampton has written a heartfelt tribute. We say farewell to Keith Parkinson in this issue and after half-a-century of contributions to the Crosby cause he goes with our sincere thanks for all he has done for us. David Lobosco has kindly agreed to take over Keith's films slot.

As usual, we have a variety of articles on an assortment of subjects from the regulars. Martin McQuade has been very busy on our behalf and he reports on his various activities. Ken Crossland has made a pilgrimage to Gonzaga and Richard Baker makes a valiant effort in *Keeping Track* to find new releases. The ICC team is discussing ideas for future Crosby CDs to fill the void and we shall shortly be approaching sympathetic record companies with suggestions. In the meantime, we still have Crosby Internet Radio to entertain us.

Gord Atkinson has a seasonal theme to his article and Graham Pascoe has some interesting facts on Bing's impact in Australia. Jason Liddiard sends details of his latest Crosby gathering and there has been a lot of activity to document in *Bing on the Box*.

It's a pleasure to welcome offerings from new contributors Patrick Sheppard, Lars Roth, Jeremy Rose and Frans van der Kolff. In addition, Jeremy has offered to "shadow" me so that if necessary he could keep the wheels turning in respect of the UK side of things.

It's rare for something new to turn up nowadays, but Michael Feinstein has uncovered a rare recording from 1944 with Bing speaking and singing in French!

We gave the sad news of Priscilla Koernig's passing as a short "Stop Press" item in our last issue and this time we have chance to make a fuller tribute.

As Christmas approaches, we shall hear Bing all over the place and it's a lovely time to be a Crosby fan. We have a couple of articles reflecting the time of year.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Malcolm Macfarlane **macwilmslo@aol.com**

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

Members will be delighted, relieved and pleased that Malcolm has decided to stay on as Editor. Malcolm appreciates the confidence that members have in his ability to produce one of the finest magazines of its kind and he has no wish to let members down who have shown generous support for the continuation of the club.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez has already come forward to take on the assistant (US) editor's post and Jeremy Rose has offered to help Malcolm in his editor's role in the UK.

Malcolm has already mentioned Wig's accident and by coincidence Judy and I were in Washington at the time, having arranged to meet him. We were able to visit him in hospital and make arrangements for the way forward. Malcolm had sent out an email seeking help with Wig's role and it was very encouraging that so many members came forward with offers of assistance.

Jim Reilly's sudden passing will come as a shock to members and I have tried to capture his contribution to Crosbyana elsewhere in the magazine. Jim was modest and unassuming about his activities for the club but we have his legacy of CDs and books to remind us of his dedication and enthusiasm for Bing Crosby's recordings. We will miss his input, jovial manner and all round enthusiasm for the ICC. RIP

At the time of compiling my report no new CDs have been announced but we are working on several ideas which hopefully will result in further ICC releases next spring.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members with a wish that they will derive much interest and enjoyment from their membership of the club.

UNITED STATES

Robert Beaver (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), John Brewer (Bel Air, Maryland), David Ginsburg (Mt Pleasant, Michigan), Maureen Holland (North Liberty, Iowa), Emma Hunt (Lafayette, Colorado), Karen Moore (Charleston, Missouri), Mike Moore (Wolf Lake, Illinois), Phil Puleo (Utica, New York), Patrick Sheppard (Jackson, Mississippi), Larry Sparrow (Durham, North Carolina), Lee Spilberg (Poplar Bluff, Missouri).

SWEDEN

Guy Jones (168 50 Bromma)

DONATIONS

The ICC continues to be very fortunate in having generous benefactors who consistently support the club with their financial contributions and we are delighted to acknowledge further generous donations from: -

UNITED KINGDOM

Nicholas Morrison, Arthur Blood.

IRISH REPUBLIC

Gerard Hanlon.

Our benefactors help keep the ICC viable and without their support we would have to raise subscriptions to maintain our current level of service to members.

DEATHS

Jim Reilly (Portsmouth, Hampshire), Tom Sim (Upminster, Essex), Elizabeth M. Gregory (Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire).

Our sincere condolences are extended to family and friends.

BING CROSBY ON CD

This is my usual reminder that the following CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £7.50, Europe £9.50 and the rest of the world £10.50. Members in the US & Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vols. 4, 8, 9 and 10

BING CROSBY in the Hall – Rare Live Recordings from KMH 1937 – 1946

BING CROSBY and the Kraft Music Hall – Rare Original Survivors

THE ROAD TO HONG KONG – SAY ONE FOR ME

BING CROSBY – GOOD AND RARE VOL 3.

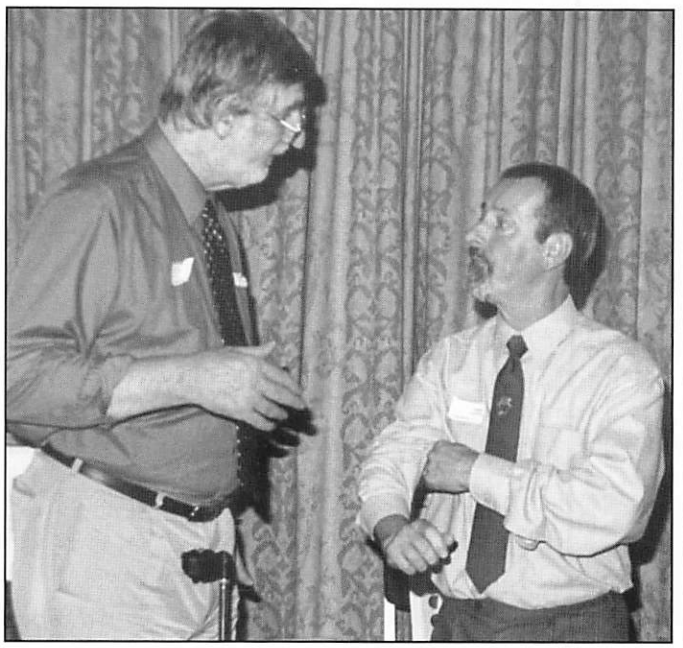
Until spring 2017, my warmest greetings to all members.

Michael Crampton **mdcrampton@gmail.com**

JIM REILLY 1939 - 2016

Jim died on August 6, 2016 having fallen a couple of times before being admitted to hospital and having heroically and stoically fought illness over many years. Jim was passionate about Portsmouth Football Club and Bing Crosby and it is his Bing passion that we now commemorate.

Possessing a wonderful sense of humour and always making light of his burden, Jim came to Leeds for our final meeting in 2015, under great duress, but nevertheless determined to be with us one final time. Over the years, he provided many video presentations for showing at Leeds and he was responsible for compiling the club's calendar for many years.



Jim and Michael working together at a Leeds meeting.

Born in and spending most of his life in Portsmouth, Hampshire, Jim married Glen and became father to two boys, Mark and Andrew. His work in the printing trade, working for the military, made him an ideal candidate to compile the various publications for the ICC with which he will always be identified.

Jim Reilly's contribution to the club and his work for the wider Crosby fraternity was prodigious and he will be remembered for his 1997/8 *Memories* CDs which brought many new tracks to CD and for his work in producing the original and the supplement to *The Songs of Bing Crosby on Compact Disc*, wherein we learn that Bing first appeared on CD in the UK in 1987. He also produced the Bing Crosby Information File which was printed by our late and dear member Michael O'Toole.

Jim worked tirelessly with co-author Wig Wiggins to produce their fine 'from 78 to CD discographies' in 2001 and 2014 and these books will be a lasting tribute to Jim's resolve to produce an accurate and readable account of Bing's commercial recordings which found their way onto CD.

Acting as the club's assistant secretary and record/tape/CD reviewer between 1996 and 2002, Jim covered a bountiful period in which Bing CDs proliferated, many of the wonderful Jonzo releases being covered in his columns.

In recent years, Jim enjoyed success when he presented Bing Crosby programmes on his local radio station, Angel Radio. His coverage brought much enjoyment to a wide audience based on southern county listeners but then later extended to a wider audience of internet listeners. Jim compiled his programmes using Mini-Disc recorders, a digital medium now almost obsolete, but ideally suited to making radio programmes.

Jim's legacy on behalf of Bing Crosby enthusiasts deserves high commendation and we will sorely miss his input, sense of humour and dedicated work on behalf of members.

Our very sincere condolences are extended to Glen, Andrew and Mark and to their extended family and friends.

Michael Crampton

'S Wonderful – Celebrating Gershwin

Kathryn Crosby was the special guest star at this gala concert held at the Hammer Theatre in San Jose, California on September 11. The concert was a fundraiser benefit for the San Jose Musical Theatre.

BingCrosby.com sale

As went went to print, bingcrosby.com were conducting a sale of a number of their CDs and DVDs. Go to http://bingcrosby.com/product-category/cds-and-vinyl

for CDs and http://bingcrosby.com/product-category/dvds for DVDs. Sale items are displayed with a green "sticker". For CDs there are two pages and a total of 16 CDs currently shown with price deductions.

Kick Your Cares Down the Stairs - And Come to *Holiday Inn*

Martin McQuade has been to see this new stage version of the classic story.

One of the more intriguing aspects of the classic film *Holiday Inn* is the clever plot device of a movie within a movie. Now the current Roundabout Theater production (in association with Universal Stage Productions) housed at The Studio 54 Theater in New York adds an extra layer, and even pokes some fun at the whimsical Pirandellian concept with a filmed segment projected just prior to the show's finale onto a screen in front of the proscenium. This is just one of the delights of a carefree and beguiling entertainment perfectly timed for the Christmas season.

Just like the movie, *Holiday Inn* is a glorious Irving Berlin songfest. The original menu of tunes is augmented by additional treats: "Steppin' Out with My Baby," "Blue Skies," "Marching Along with Time," "Heat Wave," "It's a Lovely Day Today," "Nothing More to Say," "Shakin' the Blues Away," "Let's Take an Old-Fashioned Walk," and "Cheek to Cheek." The plot pretty much remains the same, although the book by director Gordon Greenberg and Chad Hodge adjusts the structure in the grand tradition of "let's put on a show." The decision to turn the Connecticut farmhouse into *Holiday Inn* comes with maximum dramatic effect near the close of Act 1. In addition, the pivotal role of Mamie, the cupid-housemaid, has been expanded and rechristened "Louise," (perhaps in deference to Louise Beavers, who originated the part) and played with gusto by Megan Lawrence. Otherwise, the parts are unchanged, with sensational dancing stars Corbin Bleu as "Ted Hanover" and Megan Sokora as "Lila Dixon," and lilting dramatic vocalists Lora Lee Gayer as "Linda Mason" and Bryce Pinkham as "Jim Hardy."

It was my pleasure to have a telephone chat with the amiable Mr. Pinkham, who echoes Bing's insouciance and independent spirit throughout his portrayal. Indeed, he confided, "I sometimes harbor the hope, just like Jim Hardy, of leaving show business and starting a farm." He expressed his understanding for the movie and his approach to undertaking Bing's role. "We had a pre-production workshop where I viewed the original film, which was created as a means of escape during World War II. The film hardly even mentions the war. Of course, it would be foolhardy to imitate Bing. There is only one Bing. I drew inspiration from his spirit and his voice, yet strove to make the part my own." He revealed that there had been a plan to incorporate homage to Bing in the opening number, replete with "Boo-Boo-Boo's."

When did he first experience Bing? "I would watch *White Christmas* on TV with my family every year, and I also grew up watching *Holiday Inn."* What is it like to perform the most beloved Christmas song in its original context as the Yuletide season looms? "It is an intimidating experience singing the iconic "White Christmas" every night. I just want to sing the song just as it was written, with no vocal ad-libs. I tell myself before each performance that I don't have to match Bing but that I can put my own voice on it." He was not aware of the seldom-heard verse. He remarked upon hearing the melancholy lyrics, "they make sense considering the blue feel of the song. After all, the Christmas that is described in the song is an elusive ideal. "He has a special affinity for "The Little Things in Life" which he considers "a little-known gem, one of my favorites. I wish there were more of it in the production."

Mr. Pinkham observed that Berlin thought that "Be Careful, It's My Heart" would be the hit of the score. As in the film, the ballad is crucial to the central love story. He emphasized, "The romance between Ted and Linda is reinforced in the play and the confrontation between Jim and Ted comes earlier in the story than the movie, and this gives impetus to the plot." When Jim delivers a solid sock in the face to Ted, the drama takes on an added dimension.

The actor belies the opening song, "I'll Capture Your Heart" since he appears to be a nimble dancer. "I'm athletic, but never really trained as a dancer." Mr. Pinkham, a graduate of The Yale Drama School, shares his talents with "Outside the Wire," a company dedicated to using theater to address social issues, such as combat-related psychological injuries.

He offered his view on the relevance of Irving Berlin. "It's important to understand the past in order to understand the present. This is why Berlin is so necessary today. Berlin is especially important to Broadway, where his Music Box Theater remains a landmark. "

Bryce Pinkham maintains that there is a place on "The Great White Way" for both the cutting-edge musical and old-fashioned extravaganzas that inspire patrons to leave humming the tunes. He and his fellow actors definitely succeed in a most exhilarating way. All fans of the Golden Age of Broadway, Hollywood - and Bing - are urged to heed words of the title's tune.

If you're burdened down with trouble, if your nerves are wearing thin, park your load down the road and come to Holiday Inn.

Martin McQuade

(Editor: Many thanks, Martin. Sounds like a good show. David Buchanan writing on goldderby.com on October 17 looked at it too and here's an extract from his review.)

...Some reviewers fell in love with the musical's

old school Americana. Frank Rizzo (*Variety*) praised the show as a "first-class" musical and "the feel-good show of the fall" with "heart, a slightly modern sensibility and a joyful spirit." Similarly, Jeremy Gerard (Deadline) hailed it as an "exuberant, shamelessly old-fashioned tap-and-tuner," singling out Corbin Bleu, who he calls "the discovery" of the production, "tapping up a storm that recalls the young Sammy Davis Jr., technical brilliance and good time in one barely containable package."

Other critics were not as kind. Jesse Green (Vulture) criticized the show for its "sloppiness" and "corniness," exclaiming that audiences today "expect more of new musicals than hackneyed tributes to an earlier era's status quo," and deadpanning that the creative team has "turned Berlin gold into brass plate." And Charles Isherwood (*New York Times*) expressed similar sentiments, acknowledging that the musical pulls off a Berlin revue well enough, but in an overall "perky but bland" manner, quipping that it comes off like "a prematurely hung Christmas stocking smelling faintly of mothballs."

So, how will "Holiday Inn" fare at the Tony Awards? Three of its talents could reap their first-ever Tony Awards nominations. All of the critics singled out choreographer Denis Jones ("Honeymoon in Vegas") for his work, especially on the show-stopping numbers "Shaking the Blues Away" and "Let's Say It with Firecrackers." Costume designer Alejo Vietti ("Allegiance," "Beautiful") could be cited for the sheer number of inventive holiday outfits. And Bleu could potentially land a nomination for Best Featured Actor. Although he has appeared on Broadway as a replacement cast member in the past, "Holiday Inn" marks his first time originating a role and, therefore, his first opportunity to be nominated for a Tony.

David Buchanan

La Parade Des Stars

Michael Feinstein spotted a very rare item recently and kindly shared it with your editor. It's an Office of War Information disc featuring Bing speaking in French with Franchot Tone. Paul Whiteman is there too and we hear Bing saying he's going to sing "My Melancholy Baby", "As Time Goes By", "White Christmas" and "More and More". In fact he only sings the last three songs accompanied by an orchestra which may be the Whiteman ensemble. The disc runs for 9 minutes 36 seconds.

I could follow most of the French dialogue but I brought in Jeremy Rose and Jason Liddiard to comment as both of them had worked in France for a long time. Jeremy said:

> "I hesitate to say it, but Bing's spoken French is a darn sight better than his sung French on "Le Bing"! Franchot Tone sounds like he might be a fairly fluent French-speaker, and assuming that it really *is* Paul Whiteman joking with Bing, it all sounds very impressive. As far as I can hear, though, there's nothing to confirm that it's actually the Whiteman orchestra backing Mr Crosby. (Incidentally, in his spoken introduction to "More and More", the French announcer makes the point that it was introduced by Deanna Durbin in "Can't Help Singing.")"

Side Two contains a real gem. Let Jeremy explain:

> "The gist is that the show is finished and everyone is waiting in the wings, but the announcer says that John Loder and Franchot Tone have persuaded Bing to come back to the microphone. (It's all supposed to be completely impromptu...) While John Loder is handing out the parts to the band, the announcer asks Franchot Tone to explain to the audience what's going on, and he tells us that the surprise of the evening is that Bing is going to sing for the first time ever in French, and will sing, "especially for you", 'Parlez-Moi d'Amour'."

And so he does very effectively. A song he never seems to have ever sung again.

I am guessing that Bing may have recorded this disc for the Office of War Information in December 1944. He worked with Whiteman on December 24, 1944 on the Philco Radio Hall of Fame and he also recorded "More and More" that month.

Our most grateful thanks to Michael Feinstein for

discovering this rare item and sharing it with us.

There were many other similar discs too as Leonard Maltin explained in his blog.

"The history of movies and radio repeatedly intertwine, as I discovered when I wrote my book *The Great American Broadcast*. At no time was this more apparent than the 1940s, when all of Hollywood worked together to support the war effort. Now, performer and musicologist Michael Feinstein has come upon a cache of transcription discs that open a new chapter in this underappreciated facet of show-business. As he writes, "The other day I was going through transcription discs that belonged to a man named Gerald Kean who worked in radio, for years with Norman Corwin, and found about 30 shows he produced in French with Hollywood stars such as Cary Grant, Dinah Shore, Gene Tierney, Marsha Hunt, etc. I can't find anything about them online. There are lots of big titles like *Dark Victory, How Green Was My Valley, The Thin Man*, etc., but all in French and presumably sent overseas."

The labels on the 16-inch lacquer discs tell as much of the story as we're likely to know right now: they were produced for the Office of War Information Overseas Branch by something called the "Hollywood French Unit." They also identify themselves as "A Voice of America Production."

Their mission, then, was clear: to send Hollywood-quality entertainment to people of all nations and promote the American way of life. Among the shows in the Gerald Kean collection: *The Maltese Falcon, Night Must Fall, Phantom Lady, Shadow of a Doubt, Abe Lincoln in Illinois* with Franchot Tone, *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife* with Brian Aherne and Michele Morgan, *Destry Rides Again* with Dinah Shore, *Gentleman Jim* with John Loder, *Heaven Can Wait* with Gene Tierney and Victor Francen, *The Shop Around the Corner* with Gene Tierney and Felix Bressart, and many more.

In keeping with *Lux Radio Theatre* tradition, producer Kean tried to get the star of the original movie to re-create his or her part, but this only worked if and when those actors spoke French. Canadian-born Deanna Durbin had no trouble doing *It Started with Eve* and Charles Boyer was easily able to reprise his part in *Hold Back the Dawn*. As it turns out, Constance Bennett was able to revive her 1932 success *What Price Hollywood* and Cary Grant took on *Suspicion*. James Cagney may not have had the chops to play George M. Cohan in a foreign language, but his young costar Joan Leslie did appear in the OWI production of *Yankee Doodle Dandy*.

This is clearly a subject for further research and in time Michael Feinstein will donate these discs to his pet project, The Center for the Performing Arts Foundation in Indiana, where they will be available to researchers. But there is one survivor who can fill us in a bit about this unique Hollywood endeavor: the extraordinary Marsha Hunt, still with us at age 98. Her voice is heard in surviving discs of *The Lodger* and *Talk of the Town* (with that movie's costar, Jean Arthur).

When I spoke to her last week, she explained, "We did them in French because that was the most widely spoken language on the planet at the time. So they translated a lot of the old *Lux Radio Theater* hour-long shows into French. There were a couple of young actresses my age who also had good French accents. That enabled me to do some dramas entirely *en Français*. It was fun for me to do that.

"Apparently it's a matter of who taught you French. I was a New York City child but my mother had the good sense to give my sister and me a part-time governess who was an old Parisienne with beautiful French speech, and that's how I learned the language. When visitors from France would come to MGM for lunch they would always ask me to join them at their table. My accent was always complimented. I think the only difference was tempo; they rattled it off more quickly than I did."

I don't doubt Marsha's abilities any more than I do her memory. And I, for one, can hardly wait to hear what she and her colleagues sound like on these rare transcription discs."

Leonard Maltin

Jonzo Records

It is with considerable regret that we have to relay the news that John McNicholas, the proprietor of JONZO, is no longer able to supply "The Chronological Bing Crosby" series of CDs.

John devoted many years to the project and, starting with LP, switching to CD, he achieved nearly complete coverage of Bing's studio recordings from the very beginning up to 1950. A long series of 51 CDs very well mastered and superbly produced. Those items not covered were few and only discovered subsequently.

Those of us fortunate enough to have the collection will forever owe a debt of gratitude to John, one of the towering heroes of the Bing Crosby community.

A mention too for Wig Wiggins who made a major contribution to the project going to extensive lengths to obtain rare tracks for John which otherwise would not have been available to him. Wig also arranged for the entire Jonzo CD series to be part of the official music collection at the U.S. Library of Congress. It is also important to note that the Jonzo series includes a number of Bing's Blue Label and Black Label Decca recordings that have not otherwise been re-released on compact disc anywhere in the world, thus preserving that significant aspect of Bing's musical legacy for present and future generations.

Jeremy Rose commented on the Crosby Fan World site:

> "Sad news indeed. As I've said elsewhere on more than one occasion, collecting the "Jonzo" series - from buying the first LPs from the much-missed James Asman Record Store in London's Covent

Garden to eagerly awaiting the CDs, despatched two-at-a-time at regular intervals, from John himself - has been one of the absolute highlights of my years as a Crosby collector."

Zane Johnson added:

"This is very unfortunate to read, as the "Chronological" series is essential to any Bing fan. What a massive undertaking by John and all the other contributors to the series, but well worth it. I'll cherish the series that much more now."

Your Editor recalls John McNicholas coming to the Leeds meeting in 1984 with the first two albums in the series. The project had been announced in the September 1984 edition of BING and whilst it was enthusiastically welcomed by Editor Reg Bristo, Reg was sceptical about it ever covering all of Bing's recorded work. In the event, John stopped at the 1950 mark as there were very few alternates or rare tracks after that date. The ICC continued the project until the end of the Decca period through Sepia's "Through the Years" CDs.

The Jonzo production was a masterpiece that all dedicated fans should own or aspire to own, and regrettably some might now be unable to achieve that.

White Christmas: The Best Song Ever Written?

An article on the Mojo magazine website sometime ago had the interesting headline shown above.

In the spring of 1942 *(Editor – it would probably have been sometime in 1941)*, when Irving Berlin first played "White Christmas" for Bing Crosby, the crooner nodded and said, "You don't have to worry about this one, Irving."

71 years later, it's safe to say that Bing was right, many times over. "White Christmas" is, quite simply, the biggest pop song of all time. Crosby's version alone has sold over 40 million copies (depending on the source, it remains the best-selling single ever, or is second to "Candle in the Wind", Elton John's tribute to Marilyn Monroe/Princess Diana). And there have been decades-spanning covers by an A-Z of artists, including Louis Armstrong, The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, The Supremes, Bob Dylan, Twisted Sister, Bob Marley and Taylor Swift. There are versions in almost every language, including Yiddish and Swahili. Add to that endless renditions courtesy of Muzak, toys and greeting cards, and you have a song that has magically grafted itself onto humanity's DNA.

With a standard that ubiquitous, it's easy to forget that there was a time when it didn't exist.

Though Berlin, a great self-mythologizer, offered many different versions of how he wrote the song (attributing its creation variously to years from 1938-1942), its first appearance can be traced to 1937, as part of an unproduced Broadway show called *Crystal Ball.* At the time, Berlin was living in Hollywood, writing movie musicals, and "White Christmas" was conceived as a humorous number about a west coaster's view of the holiday. It began:

The sun is shining,
the grass is green,
the orange and palm trees sway.
There's never been such a day
in Beverly Hills, L.A.
But it's December the twenty-fourth
and I'm longing to be up north...

The addition of this verse colours the following refrain in a very different way, making it more of a breezy send-up than the idyllic Currier & Ives-style vision we know. After the song became a hit, Berlin ordered the verse cut from all sheet music.

The Canadian issue. The Compo company would not allow Bing's records to be played on Canadian radio!

And yet, no matter how the lyric in the refrain is interpreted, the music beneath tugs at the heart. With its chromatic movement, slight dissonances and that heartbreaking shift from major to minor on the line "May your days be merry and bright," the song almost has the character of a blues.

The sombre tone had its roots in personal tragedy. On December 25, 1928, Berlin's three-week old infant son, Irving Berlin, Jr., died of typhoid fever. For years afterward, Berlin and his wife Ellin made a Christmas Eve pilgrimage to Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx to lay flowers on their son's grave. Though Berlin would always deny that his songs were drawn from his own life, it's impossible not to connect the death of his child with his feelings towards the holiday.

The song's mournful flavour made it the perfect sentiment for wartime America. In 1942, the year of Crosby's recording, troops spent their first winter

overseas. Berlin's glistening treetops and sleigh bells in the snow spoke to their longing and homesickness for families they'd left behind.

Performing overseas for the USO, Crosby said he received requests for "White Christmas" regardless of the season. "It really got so that I hesitated about doing it because invariably it caused such a nostalgic yearning among the men that it made them sad," he recalled.

And that nostalgic yearning – for the past, for childhood, for lost innocence – is in all of us. It's what keeps the song so emotionally resonant after all this time. There is also its economy, its openness. With only 54 words in 9 lines, the lyric is non-specific enough to allow each listener to project their own holiday feelings onto its big white screen.

When Irving Berlin passed away September 22, 1989, he had lived to see "White Christmas" break every record in the popular song canon. In his 101 years, he wrote thousands of songs (he published 812 and had 451 hits, a songwriter's batting average never matched). But "White Christmas" remains his crowning achievement.

As Berlin pronounced to his copyist when he first brought it to his publishing office in Manhattan: "This is the best song anyone ever wrote."

He might be right.

Bill DeMain

Wayne Sleep

Members will recall that your Editor sometimes gets the opportunity to speak on cruise ships and naturally a talk on Bing is always included.

On a cruise in August on the Saga Sapphire, one of the other speakers was Wayne Sleep who will be well-known to UK members but perhaps not to those overseas. Wayne was a member of the Royal Ballet and went on to have a busy career in show business. He is particularly remembered for dancing with Princess Diana at the annual Christmas party of the Friends of Covent Garden at the Royal Opera House in 1985.

I had recalled that Kathryn Crosby had written in her book "My Life with Bing" that the English Royal Ballet had been invited to lunch at Bing's Hillsborough home and I asked Wayne if he had been present. He looked at me in amazement and asked how on earth I knew about this. However as the conversation progressed, it was apparent that Wayne had visited a Pebble Beach house and been entertained by Kathryn and her friends after Bing's passing. Wayne was very enthusiastic about the occasion and mentioned seeing Henry Kissinger and Clint Eastwood at that time and playing tennis with Kathryn.

When I returned home, I was able to check Kathryn's book and found that the invitation to the Hillsborough house was in 1963 when Wayne would only have been 15 so we were talking at cross purposes but interesting to find a Crosby connection nevertheless.

As usual on these cruises, I find people saying to me that they had heard that Bing was not a good father and I always have to put them right. My talk on Bing includes a mention of Gary Crosby's book which I then rebut by quoting from my long meeting with Phillip Crosby in 1999 when Phillip told me just how good a Dad Bing had been.

Bing on one of the Famous "Queen" ships in the 1950s.

On our way to join the cruise, we stayed with our friends Derek and Margaret Oliver in East Sussex and whilst we were there their son, Nigel, called to see them. During the conversation we talked about our respective golf games and Nigel mentioned that he had recently won the Bing Crosby Medal at Cranbrook Golf Course in Kent. This struck an immediate chord with me as on October 12, 1977 (two days before Bing died) he had golfed at Cranbrook and had expressed an interest in buying the course. Clearly, the club had decided to hold

an annual competition in honour of Bing's visit and it was good to realise that it was still continuing after so many years.

In October I was speaking on another cruise, this time on the Cunard ship, Queen Victoria. All the Cunard ships have large photos of some of the famous guests who have sailed with them and wandering up a staircase I came across a superb picture of Bing which I could not recall seeing before. I happened to have my iPad in my hand, so the photo is reproduced here for you all to see.

Malcolm Macfarlane

The Crosby Clambake in Warrington

Jason Liddiard reports on his second Crosby meeting.

On Sunday, 16 October it was second time around for Bing in Warrington! Our second gathering had a more structured format in comparison to our first attempt.

Welcome!

We discussed how we could take the meetings forward and make them fun and 'unmissable!' One idea we had was to name local ICC branches after one of Bing's songs, making a link between song and location. Watch this space for the announcement on the Warrington branch name!

A few years ago, the ICC had access to the Bing collection of the late Leslie Gaylor. Among the items were a number of cheques, personally signed by Bing, which Leslie had received as remittance for personal costs incurred in promoting Bing's activities. It's well known that Leslie arranged with his bank to recover the cheques once they had been processed, allowing him to keep the autographed documents. At our most recent meeting we gifted a signed cheque to each attendee as a souvenir. We will continue to do this for each new member at future gatherings.

Jason and Sharon at an earlier Leeds meeting.

News and Reviews (new releases, Crosby news etc)

An opportunity to discuss anything new on the Crosby scene, we covered Nathaniel's book and made attendees aware of a new book, scheduled for release 21 November, all about the 1930 film *King of Jazz*. Editor Malcolm had also brought along Gord Atkinson's latest book "Showbill – Volume Two" and further details can be found in the 'Books 'N' Bing' section in this issue.

A Few of My Favourite Bings! (Guests' Requests)

We invited attendees to select a favourite Bing recording and to explain why it had a special meaning to them. I kicked things off with my own selection – 'Summer Wind' from the *Seasons* album. This has a special nostalgic meaning for me, as *Seasons* was the first Bing album I bought, back in December 1977, and I remember repeatedly dropping the stylus onto this track so that I could learn the elegant Johnny Mercer lyrics.

Other choices included 'You Don't Know What Lonesome Is', one of Bing's best cowboy songs, and the 1944 Jerome Kern/Ira Gershwin standard 'Long Ago and Far Away'; if you haven't heard it for a while, treat yourself to a spin. Believe me, it doesn't get much better than this…

By the time we got to 'The Way We Were' from *Feels Good, Feels Right* we had segued into our funeral song choices! Don't worry, we won't be making that a regular feature!

Crosby Quiz (themed quiz)

The theme for our inaugural quiz was Bing General Knowledge, which led us to play some other song selections, including Bing's duet with Loyce Whiteman 'Ho Hum!' and the 1940 version of Bing's theme song, accompanied by the Paradise Island Trio. There was no outright winner of the quiz this time, but it's certainly a feature we'll include at future branch meetings.

Album Choice (classic, obscure or favourite Crosby album)

The idea here was to home in on a particular album, perhaps one we hadn't heard in full for a while, to listen and discuss its virtues. In the mid-1980s there were a number of MCA compilation albums featuring the usual Crosby hits (Swinging on a Star, You Are My Sunshine etc.) but there were a couple compiled by Crosby stalwart John Marshall which contained lesser-known tracks. For a young collector such as myself at the time, these were a very welcome distraction to the usual compilations, so our album choice this time around was *Give Me the Simple Life* MCL 1848, from 1987.

Film/TV Show selection

We watched the recent BBC programme *Talking Pictures*, which featured Bing as the subject, followed by a *Best of Hollywood Palace* compilation from Greg Van Beek, then a wonderful DVD, put together by Malcolm of Bing singing with Perry Como on each

other's TV shows in 1960.

I sincerely hope that others amongst you will take the initiative to launch local gatherings. It doesn't matter how many or how few attendees you might attract. It's just a great opportunity to get together with like-minded folk and share a passion! If you do, Let me know…

The next meeting in Warrington will be on December 10. Y'all come!

Jason Liddiard **jkl@galleryjkl.com**

(Editor: Our thanks to Jason for organising this very pleasant get-together and thanks also to Sharon for feeding us all. It reminds me of how Michael Crampton started off his Crosby meetings in 1966.)

Priscilla Koernig

We gave the sad news of Priscilla's passing as a "Stop Press" item in our last issue and we now have chance to say a little more. Priscilla was interred at Skylawn Memorial Cemetery in San Mateo, California on July 9 and naturally Bing's recordings were played.

Priscilla and Pat Sullivan shared the duties of President and Vice-President of Club Crosby for almost a decade. One of Priscilla's regular columns was "News from West Coast" and we are reproducing her report in BINGANG from March 1976 as a tribute to her.

News from the West Coast

The last four months (from October, 1975, thru January, 1976) have been most eventful times, creating fond memories, for some of us club members. First of all, it started in October, 1975. A friend of mine called and told me that she had heard announced on the radio that Bing was to appear at Treasure Island on October 5, 1975—-it was to be a similar Command Performance that was originally broadcast from Treasure Island in 1939. I immediately phoned the radio station and had tickets put aside in my name. The only problem was that they had to be picked up almost immediately. I now work in San Mateo—-the radio station is in San Francisco! So, fortunately, a fellow I work with agreed to pick up the tickets for me on his way home from work. I had just managed to get enough tickets for Al and Millie Sutton, Matt De Vera and myself.

We thought we had allowed plenty of time to get there; however, we probably could have allowed at least a half hour more to get to Treasure Island. As it was, we had to wait in line about an hour—-and weren't the first in line. It all worked out fairly well, even though we could have gotten seated a little closer had we gotten there earlier.

The show started promptly—-Bill Baldwin was the Master of Ceremonies. Bing was there a little ahead of time. He helped with some of the announcing. The funniest part was when Bing and Mel Blanc did a skit. Plus, it was a joy to see Bing crack up laughing during the "opening" of Fibber McGee's closet! But the most memorable part of all was when Bing was announced—-and the audience gave him a standing ovation. He sang "That's What Life Is All About" and "Send in the Clowns". This was the first time Al Sutton had ever seen Bing in person. It was the second time Matt De Vera had seen Bing perform in person, although he's seen him two or three times at the Crosby Golf Tournament. But, it brought back nice memories for Matt because the first time he saw Bing was at the original 1939 Bing Crosby Day at the San Francisco Exposition on Treasure Island.

Our second big moment since last journal was at the Laguna Honda Hospital Show—this year being a little late—-on December 22, 1975. I was very fortunate to get my good friend Pat Sullivan in with me, along with other friends, George Crowder, Ted, Eleanor and Kathy Kasper, and Millie and Al Sutton, because this show is just supposed to be for patients only. The show started with the Mason Kahn Dancers, also had a juggler, dog act, Arthur Duncan, etc., etc., etc.….but the highlight of every year's show was The Crosby Family. After collecting Bing's records for years, this was the first time Ted Kasper had ever "dreamed" of seeing Bing perform in person. He and his family thoroughly enjoyed the whole day very much. Kathy did a tremendous job of taking beautiful photographs of Bing and family with her father's camera.

Bing entertains at the Laguna Honda show

I was able to introduce the Kaspers and Suttons to Bing when he left Laguna Honda. Also, to my surprise—-when walking up to Kathryn with my annual Christmas gift to the Crosbys, my homemade cookies—-she said to

me "Get in the picture, Priscilla!" And, motioned me to turn around. After this, I introduced everyone. But, lo and behold—-on Christmas Day——there we were with the Crosbys outside Laguna Honda, all on Kathryn's local Christmas Day Show—-on TV! This was quite a thrill to see everyone on TV. When I talked to Alan Fisher shortly after that, that was one of the first things he mentioned to me—-that we were on Mrs. Crosby's Television Show Christmas Day!

Our annual trip to the Crosby Pro-Am Golf Tournament was quite a success this year due to the beautiful weather. We left San Mateo after I got off work on Wednesday evening, January 21, 1976, around 5:30, and arrived in Carmel around 8:00 P.M. This year, the Art Siegels from Pennsylvania, Herb Bootmans from San Diego, Al Suttons from Sacramento and Ted Kasper from Texas were there besides Pat and myself. We, fortunately, stayed at the same motel; but, unfortunately, didn't always have the opportunity to stay together. We were also happy to meet Kevin Anderson and his wife, Bridget, and spend two evenings with them. We also saw Matt De Vera one day.

Pat and I managed to get our 2nd Club Crosby interview with Bing on Thursday, January 22, 1976. Bing was very gracious and we were able to interview him for fifteen minutes. Pat has already told you about his great recording news in her editorial, so I won't go into that.

Priscilla (centre) and Pat Sullivan interview Bing.

We were also lucky to see Alan Fisher at the Tournament on Friday, January 23rd. He introduced me to two other members of the Crosby household who have been with Bing for years. In fact, he introduced Pat and myself as Mr. Crosby's "greatest fans".

On Saturday, January 24th, we finally were able to see Nathaniel tee off, having had only the time to see him very briefly Thursday and Friday. Kathryn was there also. She mentioned to someone that Nathaniel had the knack of forgetting about his shot as soon as he hits the ball. We probably could have stayed with them longer, but were afraid that if we didn't start back toward our way to Pebble Beach that we wouldn't see our Bing start to televise the Saturday rounds. Well, we made it in time to see him climb the structure to televise the tournament, and saw him again very briefly as he went to his car afterwards.

We also saw "him" about five minutes before the ladder climb, Sunday. He and Nathaniel came out and stood near the 18th hole and talked. Phil Harris yelled to Bing, "Hey, Bing—-you took away my gallery!" Bing said, "I'm sorry!" We just kept taking as many pictures as possible. After his descent upon the ladder, we decided to take off for home.

As usual, the four days go by too fast; and, besides the fact that we always think we could have changed our decisions as to where to be to try and see Bing more, we had a marvelous time.

Priscilla Koernig

(Editor: What nice memories Priscilla's report will have brought back. It was a different time then and how great it must have been to see Bing in action so often. The debt we owe to Priscilla is immense and without the hard work she did with Pat Sullivan the Club could well have foundered in the 1970s. RIP Priscilla.)

Priscilla shows your editor her Crosby room in 1999.

John Salisbury

Vernon Wesley Taylor of Portland, Oregon will be remembered by the older members of Club Crosby. Vernon was a prolific worker for the Crosby cause and in 1987 he wrote a series of articles for the Victorian Bing Crosby Society in Australia for

publication in their *Crosby Voice* magazine. One of these was about John Salisbury whose radio shows for KXL are now being heard on Crosby Internet Radio. We thought you might like to know more about these shows which should not of course be confused with the Gord Atkinson "The Crosby Years" series. Vernon wrote:

...In 1972, John Salisbury was the most active member of the staff of radio station, KXL in Portland, Oregon. His rich and reasoned vocal tones had become solid fixtures to the area's listeners, speaking to them daily on varied kinds of broadcasts. Best of all were his 'Sunday Spectacular' programs. These were hour-long slices of life - social, political and otherwise - filled with nostalgic treasures stretching back to the beginning of recorded sound. To build these shows, he delved like a marine biologist into the great ocean of transcribed historical sediment and dredged up bucketsful of raw material which he then adroitly translated and arranged into the town's most popular broadcast. Mind you, this was years after television had 'taken over'.

John Salisbury started his radio career in Minneapolis where his mother had a successful show of her own in daytime radio. During his World War II service, he worked as a writer-producer-performer in an Army Entertainment Unit in Brazil but when life had returned to more peaceful attitudes, he was back somewhere at home building nostalgia programming among other kinds of radio work; places such as Salt Lake City, Washington D.C. By the time he had decided to stake a claim in Portland, Bing had become a continuing aspect of his professional life and he had become one of the great performer's unofficial publicists.

In the early 1960's, the producer of 'Sunday Spectacular' flew to Hollywood on assignment and, among other celebrities, interviewed Crosby. "I was pretty busy on that trip," John said, "in one day I managed to talk to Sinatra, Rosemary Clooney, Sammy Davis Jr, as well as Bing", most of it on the *Robin and the 7 Hoods* set. He spoke with Bing again while filming *Stagecoach* and also during the TV taping of the "Hollywood Palace" series.

By this time, the two of them were operating on a less formal basis. Despite his busy schedule of seeing many people every day, Crosby easily recognized Salisbury and was inclined to be even more loquacious than usual; he had come to trust him as well as respect him. In a letter to me during John's greatest success as a producer of Bing Crosby shows, he said, "Mr. Salisbury is a nice man. He knows his job very well and always has ready good questions to ask."

Among his earlier offerings on KXL Radio, "The Bing Crosby Story" was a straight biographical effort and ran two Sundays in the autumn of 1969. The success this met with encouraged those involved to mull the possibility of something even more ambitious. Was every soul in town a Crosby fan? If so, a truly epic display of the singer's talents was surely warranted. John's notion of a career-biography laid against the background of Crosby's life was allowed to fly after the studio heads agreed and a willing sponsor was elected. By 1972 the huge project was underway with much of it in place by the time Salisbury began negotiations with Crosby.

John Salisbury meets Bing on the Robin and the 7 Hoods set.

"The Crosby Years" started in June the following year, initially planned for a twenty-six week Sunday run. The first interview session, in Bing's Hillsborough home, was designed to elicit facts not ordinarily known and conducted by John in a quiet, refreshingly candid manner. Both men referred to continuity-notes while they spoke into an omni-directional mike connected to John's busy little Sony portable tape-recorder, while seated (Bing on a divan, John in an easy chair) in the library-office where the singer usually did most his work while at home. The weekly segments clearly indicate the warm rapport that existed between them, while the so-called 'Uncut Interview' material is a deep pleasure to hear. A remark from this source has been used by many others since. In responding to the questions, 'How do you want to be remembered? What would you like your epitaph to be?' Bing says, "I'd like to be remembered as a guy who could carry a tune" (!).

It might be asked, how did Salisbury persuade Crosby to co-operate so generously, giving so much of

his time and effort and not demand the big money his services usually earned? John's answer masks the loyalty the singer gave to those he had learned to appreciate and trust. "Actually, it was very simple," John said, "I telephoned and asked him."

It was, as it happened, a fortuitous moment for both. Crosby had slowly grown less active and discovered playing more golf and hanging around the house increasingly pleasurable. He had not stopped, certainly, but his public appearances had diminished while his record-output had become almost a trickle. By this time he was well beyond the age of retirement. He was rich and famous, just a trifle weary of the pressures and hard work his job had always demanded. But, like the old fire-horse who starts at the sound of the station-bell, he was, without realizing it, 'champing at the bit'. When Salisbury's call came, he knew a worthwhile project when he saw one. This was not just one more disc-jockey interview. "Sure!" he told John, "Come on down. What day are you going to be here?"

Because the series delineated each year of the singer's life, interesting material could be put to use. Dozens of the world's great personages and numerous lesser-lights joined him in a long, colourful tapestry of those sixty-nine Crosby Years. The two of them connected the wonderful parade together with sparkling, insightful commentary. Each Sunday at three, the audience interrupted their lives to turn on their radios to KXL. They heard Bing say at the top of the show, "This is Bing Crosby, won't you join John Salisbury and me in another chapter from The Crosby Years?"

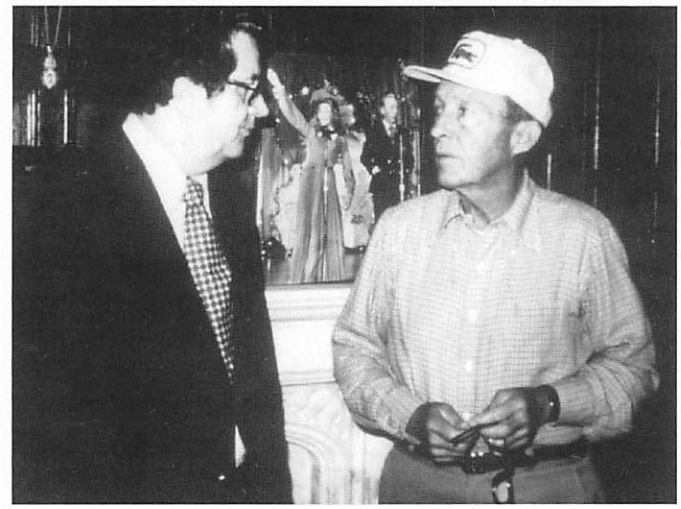
As the Sundays rolled by, the listenership grew and it became apparent that twenty-six were not going to be enough. More telephone calls and additional visits to Hillsborough were made. The format was opened out with new information and recorded historical material being added. John's wife, Joan, accompanied him to the Crosby home, and this time the Salisburys joined the Crosbys for a delicious home-cooked lunch. Ah, the perks of success!

By the time it was over, it had stretched to thirty-nine weeks with a couple of excellent Christmas specials (aired only one day apart) tossed in for good measure. The old town was bubbling over with Bing. The sponsor, euphoric with so much new business, changed its name from Portland - to Far West Federal - Savings and Loan, spreading itself beyond the city and opening branches all over the state.

Less than two years later, with the sponsor as well as the public begging for more, the team of 'Crosby & Salisbury' reprised their act and called it "Fifty Fabulous Years". This time, the format was changed to accent - and capitalize upon the years of Bing Crosby's recording career. The station, justifiably proud of their own years as a class-act in radio, felt that coincidence too strong to ignore, and acting on John's suggestions, made it abundantly clear there was not one but two 'demi-centennials' to celebrate. The programme narration and the advertising stressed that fact.

The newspapers eagerly provided elaborate publicity, the studio increased its spot-announcements and John was ensconced at a table in the outside foyer...right out on the public sidewalk almost...of the downtown branch of the sponsor's bank. There he merrily signed his autograph on such things as books, records, blank sheets (but no cheques, thank you) and whatever was handy for those fans waiting in line to greet him. He responded to questions in a befittingly serious fashion, posed for snapshots and allowed himself to be ogled all afternoon by busy shoppers. It was, to repeat a phrase, a very good year.

Even your retiring correspondent enjoyed himself, if on a distant periphery, for he was asked to accompany Salisbury on his next trip to Hillsborough. He was also asked to take his camera along and obtain pictures during the interview. Bing wore a long-visored 'admiral's cap' especially for the occasion and invited the new-born photographer to snap his shutter to the utmost. (The less said of this, the better, however, for it sadly served to illustrate that old showbiz maxim 'Fans belong in the audience'.)



One of Vernon's photos

With his remarkable broadcasts, Salisbury had re-sparked the fire-horse into action. Bing immediately climbed back into his traces by increasing his professional activity. Very soon there was a number of new television appearances. Over the course of the months of the shows and those that followed, he produced several new LP's, made even more charity appearances and began plans to do another 'Road' picture with Bob Hope. Best of all, the unforgettable stage concerts were begun in America and Europe. He seriously considered taking this troupe to Australia and New Zealand. The fifty-year observance of his fantastic career demonstrated his popularity had not dimmed very much, despite the profound changes taking place in the entertainment world, indeed he was more loved and

appreciated than ever. Clearly, he discovered that grazing quietly in the retirement pasture was not the way to go for him. In a telephone conversation, he gave John some of the credit for his resurgence (if that is the proper term here): "I'd have to say that it is true. John Salisbury was one of the people who made me see I ought to get back to work."

Sadly, though, he had little time left. Many plans were cut off and left dangling like severed chords when he died. "Fifty Fabulous Years" finished up on June 27, 1976 and, while there were but sixteen months to go, he made the most of them, even against his physician's express advice. On one of their last visits together, he told Phil Harris, "Yep, the doctor says I've got to take it easy." But the overseas concerts and more recording sessions were still ahead...

Salisbury had attended several of those concerts and was on hand in London for one of the last ones. Along with the thousands of others it was a sell-out crowd he watched as Bing made a gesture from the stage that was unprecedented for him. As Rosemary Clooney later reported, "It was almost as if he knew that he would not see most of them again." He stretched out his arms toward the audience, "I love you all" he told them in a soft goodbye.

Salisbury re-made the "The Crosby Years" in 1982 for Oregon Public Radio. By this time, he was, himself, near retiring. His co-host was still Bing, in a way, because much unused interview material was built into the new series. Seldom has such a happy circumstance taken place: A world-famous personage responding so well and so much to the request of a local professional. "Bing did everything I ever asked of him," Salisbury has stated publicly several times. "He kept every single promise he made to me."

Vernon Wesley Taylor

Behind the music of a holiday favorite

John Hunneman, writing in Southern California's *Press-Enterprise* a year or two back gave some interesting background information about another of Bing's biggest Christmas hits.

As Christmas music fills the air, a tradition in this space for more than a decade is to take a look behind the scenes at the story of one those popular holiday tunes.

Mix together one architect, one lawyer, throw in a lawsuit and a World War, stir vigorously, and you've got the ingredients for one of the most endearing holiday songs of all time.

You can guess from the title and the now familiar lyrics that "I'll Be Home for Christmas" was a war-time song about a soldier longing for snow, mistletoe and "presents on the tree."

The song was recorded by Bing Crosby on Oct. 4, 1943 and became the second war-time hit for the crooner following "White Christmas," which was released a year earlier.

Songwriting credits are given to Walter Kent, James "Kim" Gannon and Sam "Buck" Ram. However, if I've learned anything from years of writing columns about holiday songs, it's never that easy.

I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS
Words and Music by KIM GANNON, WALTER KENT and BUCK RAM
Bing Crosby
PRICE 50¢
KIM GANNON-WALTER KENT
CRITERION MUSIC CORP.
RKO Bldg. • Radio City • N. Y.

The story, briefly told, is the three men knew each other and, following the success of "White Christmas" were eager to write a holiday standard of their own.

Years before, a homesick Ram had written a song called "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and sent it to his mother. Ram mentioned the song to the other men, but nothing came of it and they parted company.

A year later Kent (music) and Gannon (lyrics) collaborated on what would become the Crosby version of the song, which was quite a bit different than the version written by Ram.

Nevertheless, Ram's music publisher filed suit. A judge decided there was no similarity between the two songs except the title, however the court ordered Ram's name added to the song credits and said he should receive royalties.

"I'll Be Home for Christmas" became the most requested song at U.S.O shows in both Europe and the Pacific. The song has since been recorded by hundreds of artists from Perry Como to Lady Antebellum.

So who were Kent and Gannon?

Walter Maurice Kaufman (later Kent) was born in 1911 in New York City and studied at both Julliard and

City College of New York. Kent was working as an architect and writing music as a hobby when he had his first big hit, a novelty song called "Pu-leeze Mr. Hemmingway."

When World War II began he teamed with lyricist Nat Burton to write "The White Cliffs of Dover" and "When the Roses Bloom Again," two songs which lifted Allied morale.

Kent wrote songs for movies for more than 30 years and was twice nominated for an Academy Award. He died in Los Angeles in 1994 at the age of 82.

James Kimball Gannon was born in Brooklyn in 1900. He graduated from St. Lawrence University and Albany Law School and passed the bar examination in New York in 1934.

Several years later he began writing songs. In 1942 he had a big hit with "Moonlight Cocktail" recorded by the Glenn Miller Orchestra. Gannon went on to write songs for both film and the Broadway stage.

In 1948 he and Kent worked together again on a Walt Disney film called *Melody Time* and in 1951 the two collaborated on the score of the Broadway play "Seventeen."

Gannon died in Florida in 1974 at age 73.

His most famous lyric, "I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams" remains a touching part of the holiday season.

John Hunneman

(Editor: It appears that the BBC banned "I'll Be Home for Christmas" in view of its "sickly sentimental" lyric!)

Bing and a Generation X-er

Patrick Sheppard makes his debut in our pages with his recollection of his first discovery of Mr. Crosby.

It was December of 1973 and I was lying on my stomach, deep in the comfort of 1970s plush shag carpet, with my chin resting on my hands, getting ready to watch a Christmas special. We were not a terribly religious family, but my Mother loved the Christmas season and we never missed a Holiday TV special. I was only six years old and did not know anything about the show we were settling in to watch. When the show credits appeared I only recognized the actor Michael Landon of "Bonanza" and "Little House on the Prairie" fame. I didn't have a clue as to who Bing Crosby was, but my Mom assured me that he was a great entertainer. This special was Bing's "Sun Valley Christmas Special" and from the moment I heard his voice I was hooked. I also thought Bing had the coolest laid-back manner I'd ever seen and I stayed riveted during the hour long program.

Star quality is something even a young child can relate to, and from the moment I saw Bing on television, I was enamored by a certain magic he possessed. His voice was warm and inviting and in some measures conversational. Bing made me feel comfortable and at ease, like I was watching a friend or family member perform, albeit a family member with an ocean of talent. Bing's age might have also pulled me into his orbit, for I still had most of my great-grandparents alive and Bing was around their ages, or only a few years younger. Having so many senior family members in my life as a child, made me appreciate the wisdom that comes with longevity and how true talent never stops evolving. Bing's talent surely never waned, even if his material wasn't as strong as in his prime.

Bing dances with a snowman in his Sun Valley Christmas Special.

Bing had already had an almost fifty year career by the time I discovered him, but he did seem to have a career rejuvenation throughout the 1970s. One thing that did perplex me, regarding Bing's age, was how someone of Bing's age could have such a young family. I asked my parents and they explained that Bing also had four grown sons from his first family. Being a kid, I found it fascinating that Bing had this young family, with another family already grown, and I did on occasion, in my childlike fertile imagination, imagine what it would be like to have a father of that age. I daydreamed that a sophisticated guy like Bing Crosby would have been a blast to have as a family member.

Over the decades I have come to look upon Bing Crosby as a cherished family member. One who gives

me joy and peaceful serenity through his alluring vocal style and his many films. From 1973 until his death in 1977, I was lucky enough to see Bing on Johnny Carson's late night show, my parents having let me stay up late to watch that fixture of American television viewing, on numerous TV specials, and his regularly run Minute Made orange juice commercials. Sadly, I was only to know a living Bing for about four years. I can well remember the news of Bing's death and how sad it made me. The only good thing to come out of his passing was all the great television specials that aired to honor such an outstanding career. During the footage shown after Bing's death, I first caught a glimpse of what Bing was like as a film and radio star. For there was no YouTube airing Crosby career highlights, nor was cable in many homes around 1977. If I was going to find out more about Bing, my search would include some homework.

My hometown of Jackson, MS was only a mid-sized city of about 200,000 in the 1970s, but one thing Jackson did have was an amazing library system. It was at the downtown Jackson library, that I first discovered further Bing Crosby treasures. There were several books on Bing that could be checked out, as well as a sizable collection of records he had recorded. I was well familiar with 45s and LPs, but the collection of 78s the library carried was a surprise. I checked out the 78s first, for they were somewhat of a novelty to me. What I discovered upon listening to these 78 records, was how Bing's voice had deepened with age, as most male voices do. At first I stayed besotted with the older Crosby voice, for that is the one I knew first. However, through the years I have come to the conclusion, if only for my own ears, that Bing's voice from the 1930s and 1940s was a magical instrument and it's now his younger vocal style that I'm drawn to.

I was not able to enjoy many of Bing's films until we got cable TV in the early 1980s. The first film of his I remember seeing was *Going My Way* and then the classic cable channels started to run the old Crosby and Hope road films on a regular basis. During that era of my life, I preferred Bing's comedies, with or without Hope, and wasn't really drawn to his dramatic roles. To this day I still have an attachment to Bing's comedies and musical films. I have, however, come to appreciate his dramatic film roles and consider *Little Boy Lost, The Country Girl,* and *Man on Fire* to be superb movies in which Bing gave top notch acting performances. It's a shame he didn't get more character roles as he aged. Bing also did a good job in 1966's *Stagecoach,* but Bing was about the only star who shined in that remake of a classic Hollywood film. Having studied Crosby's film career and knowing the huge box office attraction he was during his peak, I can't help but feel that the film aspect of Bing's career gets short-changed by film historians.

By 1983 I had had a decade of being a loyal Bing Crosby fan and it was a shock to my system when Gary Crosby published his tell-all memoir. The tabloids in the States went wild with lurid coverage of this image destroying book by Bing's oldest child. I remember thinking if Gary's memories were indeed accurate, would I be able to stay the huge fan of Bing's that I had become? After all, child abuse is unacceptable in any form whatsoever. I just couldn't wrap my mind around the Bing who was being described as an ogre in the press reports during the 1983-1984 period. I basically decided that I would keep enjoying Bing Crosby's work and put Gary's book out of my mind as best I could. Nevertheless, images of the way Bing treated, or allegedly, treated his first four sons haunted me for the longest time.

Finally around 1995 I found a copy of *"Going My Own Way"* at a used book store in New Orleans and paid a dollar for it. I had already heard most of the accusations Gary slung at his Dad during the tabloid trash media's blitz, so that part of the book was no surprise for me. In retrospect I did come away from the book thinking, that in many ways, Bing was no stricter than lots of fathers from the first half of the 20th Century. Also, one has to take into account Bing's strict Catholic Jesuit upbringing, which much like the Protestant Evangelical Churches of the American South, followed the motto of "spare the rod and spoil the child." Having read this book and after studying the issue of Bing's supposed abusive behavior, it seems that Gary made up large portions of his memoir, trying his best to have a huge bestseller, like Christina Crawford had with her "Mommie Dearest" book.

Having put aside the bit of rubbish that the book was, I've tried to educate as many people from my generation, and younger generations, about Bing Crosby as possible. And it's not hard to do, if a younger person is a true lover of a unique musical stylist and likes first rate movie stars. Like many people my age, and the more youthful music enthusiasts, I too love The Beatles, Elton John, The Rolling Stones, Bowie, Prince, etc and all of the amazing artists who have blossomed in the Rock 'n' Roll era. But it's not just about Elvis, The Beatles, Michael Jackson, Madonna, or even the multi-talented Frank Sinatra. Crosby deserves to be listed with (or above) all the giant artists of the twentieth century. In fact, Bing Crosby paved the way for the mega Star formula. I feel so honored to push Bing on my friends and acquaintances. There is no artist, in modern popular culture, who is more important than Crosby. I fell in love with Bing as a young Generation Xer, and I've never fallen out. Now it's time to get more Xers on the Bing train and to build an informative bridge, about Crosby's impact, in the direction of the Generation Y crowd and the younger hip Millennials. Bing was, in his heyday, the hippest singer and movie star around and he

should still be fashionable in today's world.

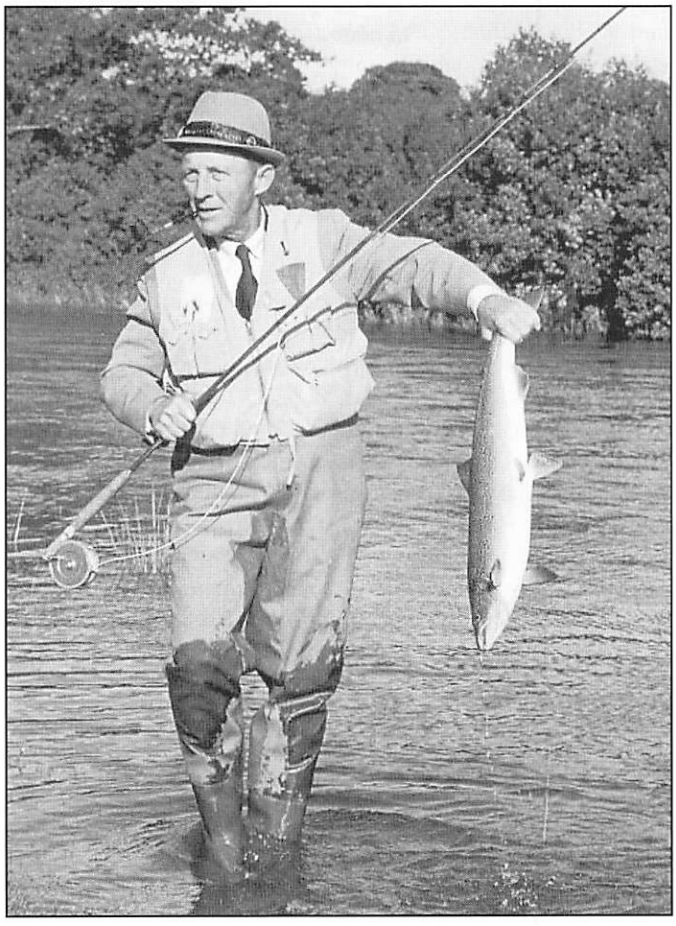
Patrick Sheppard

(Editor: And so say all of us, Patrick.)

Bing Crosby: Entertainer, 'American Sportsman'

Jim Abrams, a retired wildlife officer supervisor for the state Division of Wildlife in Findlay, Ohio, partly owes his love of fishing to Bing. Writing in his local paper, *The Courier,* on October 15, he explained the reason why.

My dad passed away when I was 13 years old and one of the many lingering voids includes the loss of my fishing mentor. I was really just learning the outdoor ropes and I was left to find my own way. A couple of my friends' dads tried to make a special effort to help me out, but most of them were more adept at tossing a baseball than a Jitterbug or Hula-Popper. Baseball and football were certainly fun but they just didn't offer enough. They didn't ring true to me. Then I met Bing Crosby.



It was a Sunday afternoon and our family had just gotten home from church. I flipped on the TV and was waiting for it to warm up, hand poised over the dial ready to flip through the half dozen channels. An announcer began booming before a picture was even clear: "Welcome to 'The American Sportsman.' Today we will be fly fishing for Atlantic salmon with Bing." I plopped myself on the floor with one of the sofa pillows. I don't really remember all the details, but I do remember being mesmerized. It was the first time I had ever heard of a fly rod.

Bing looked like he had just left church himself, complete with a tie and dapper felt fedora. He sported some kind of chest-high boots and was waving a rod that must have been 10 feet long. The line was thick and traveled in long looping casts which he repeated until he allowed it to float gently to the water. He would gracefully pull the rod back and the line would be tugged from the water and travel that beautiful arcing path behind him, then he would haul it forward then back again in some kind of aerial ballet.

His jaw was clenched down on a briar pipe and he didn't just look like he was showing off for some TV show; he was really enjoying himself. He finally landed a salmon and, pulling the briar from his lips, sang a smiling song that only Bing could pull off. He was genuinely happy; he wasn't acting. I didn't understand the rod, the methods or anything else about what Bing was doing. I only knew that I wanted to try this kind of fishing. I wanted to be that happy again.

It was February, but I still picked up a glass seven-weight rod and a Daiwa automatic reel at a sporting goods dealer, even though I had no idea how to use them. I then stopped at the library and checked out every book about fly fishing. My first casts with that rod were made across our snow-swept yard. The neighbors thought I was nuts.

That now seems like a long time ago and, since that time, I've improved my equipment and my skills. More importantly, Bing had brought me something I thought I might have lost, something I still experience with each cast.

Today too many of the shows about hunting and fishing concentrate too much upon the kill. It has to be the biggest, the most or at least the coolest video. They turn something natural into a competition and that just isn't how most sportsmen operate. Sometimes, I think they miss the happy.

I wish that Bing's kind of show still played on a Sunday afternoon. There might be some kid that needs it. You don't have to be the best, you just need to be.

Jim Abrams

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

John Bassett, "Bingville", 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex SS4 1RZ, UK

"Alternate Bing Crosby – Vol. 2". Issued as a companion volume to Colin Pugh's invaluable 1988 publication (still available from the ICC), this 67-page edition continues the story by examining every alternate Take discovered since that first edition. In total, 131 titles are dealt with in this A4 size publication, currently available at £7.50 (including postage). All remittances in £ sterling should be made payable to John Bassett and sent to him at the address above.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com – website: www.fesfilms.com/)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD. They also have thousands of Public Domain films and TV shows. Films are sold on DVD-R and Mpeg2 video file formats.

Lars Schinnerling, by email from Lagen, Germany

For sale: GINNY SIMMS – A discography of all her commercial recordings, movies and known radio appearances (including 20 with Bing Crosby). Illustrated with numerous photos from the various stages of her career, newspaper clippings, sheet music, movie posters and lobby cards. 330pp, softbound in A3 format. Price (airmail delivery included): £15 or US$20 via cash or PayPal to lschinnerling@gmx.net

Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: deryk@net2000.com.au)

The Society has been running since 1977 having originally been formed by the late Bob Machliss. Bi-monthly newsletters are issued and Josie Conway who has been compiling the newsletter for many years has just announced her retirement. Many thanks Josie for all you have done.

There are regular film nights and in August, the film night featured *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* supported by a succession of clips of songs by Arthur Freed and Nacio Herb Brown. The October evening had *Riding High* and *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* as the main attractions. The final film night of the year is planned for December 6. The venue is the Library behind the Collingwood Town Hall complex at 11 Stanton St., Abbotsford, Melbourne.

Internet sites:

BING magazine

This site contains a considerable amount of reference material and Lionel Pairpoint's marvellous radio book, Frans van der Kolff's incredible "Songography" and Keith Parkinson's magnificent "The A-Z of Bing's Movies" can all be accessed. Your editor's book "Bing Crosby – Day by Day" is on the site too as is the Bing Crosby Discography originally created by Richard Baker and now maintained by David Currington. All of these books are being updated as new information arises. Since the site was redesigned some years ago by Howard Crossland, it has been visited no less than 37,284 times. (The figure was 35,753 four months ago so it's still proving useful.)

See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

www.BingCrosby.com

This comes under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains a mass of information plus some excellent audio and video vaults which contain much rare material. And of course there's Crosby Internet Radio too!

Bing Crosby on Facebook

This also comes under the auspices of Bing Crosby Enterprises and Bing's Facebook page is at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

Daily entries are made and the number of people who

have "liked" the site is now 272,761.

Bing Crosby House

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby-House/296302530555116

Rare items from Gonzaga's collection are frequently displayed and it's well worth a look. Grace Muljadi has taken over management of the Bing Crosby House page, replacing Maggie. She is a junior history major at Gonzaga University. 527 likes.

Bing Crosby on Twitter

See www.twitter.com/Bingconstantly for this site which has lots of useful tweets and has 6529 followers now.

@Bing_Crosby is still the place to go for Bing Crosby Inc. There are 4088 followers as we go to press.

Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby—"The Old Groaner"—The Bing Crosby Fan Page

Administered by Bud Lehn, this Facebook group now has 375 members. Plenty of entries being posted. Our member Dave Richards often puts up lyrics from Crosby songs and challenges members of the group to name the song. It's one of those things that challenges you until you can remember what the answer is.

Jack Boyle's "Bing for the Seasons - the music of Bing Crosby" has a page on Facebook too. There are 696 likes at present.

The Early Bing Crosby 1926-1936

This Facebook group was created back in 2009 but has become more active recently. It is administered by Mike Pearl a retired crime reporter living in Georgia and there are 307 members. The group statement is "Before he became overwhelmingly commercial and tried to be too many things for too many people, Bing was truly in a class by himself."

Crosby Fan World

This bulletin board type site is at:
http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/

Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker. If you have any Bing news please consider making an entry on the site and if there are any Crosby matters you want to discuss, this is an ideal place to do so

Jon Oye's Blog

ICC stalwart Jon has his own first-class blog with several pages about Bing showing many rare items from his collection. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/

The Bing Crosby News Archive

David Lobosco runs this blog which has news and many stories about Bing at http://bingfan03.blogspot.co.uk/

John Marshall's Compilations

John's excellent 'A Night At The Movies', 'Bing - The Written Word' and 'Footloose Follies' with their many clips of Bing can best be found by using Google as your search engine. As in *internet archive creator john c. marshall* (N. B. It won't work with other search engines, it has to be Google.)

Steven Lewis' Bing Crosby Internet Museum

Steven has put up some of the useful reference material he collected when the discussion board was active. See *http://www.stevenlewis.info/crosby/*

Have you seen

Memory Lane

the acclaimed quarterly magazine for lovers of 1920s, 1930s and 1940s music? Although the emphasis is on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, Memory Lane also covers the American bands, jazz, variety, etc. Al Bowlly - Britain's favourite vocalist is regularly featured.

Memory Lane is quality printed, fully illustrated and nicely presented with articles, CD reviews, Readers Letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A "must" for 78 RPM collectors.

Memory Lane also issues CDs mainly of British dance bands and vocalists, DVDs, runs guided walks in central London identifying the locations where the bands used to play, etc. and hosts nostalgic events in London.

Initial annual subscription only £10 (UK) or £15 (overseas) for readers of BING magazine. (Normal price £15 - UK, £20 - overseas.) Please send cheque payable to "Memory Lane" to

Memory Lane, P O Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England.

Or visit our web site - www.memorylane.org.uk where you can pay on-line.

OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com, website: www.flias.com/)

A magazine called *Laine Lines* is published three times a year.

International Al Jolson Society, c/o Sandra K. Gerloff, 419 Glenwood Drive, Douglassville, PA 19518, USA (website: www.jolson.org - also on Facebook)

A different Jolson radio show can be heard via the web site each week.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, email: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

Nat King Cole International Fan Club, c/o Roy Holmes, 18 Rutland Drive, Morden, Surrey SM4 5QH, UK (phone: 020-8648-8858, website: www.highstreets.co.uk/kcc/index.shtml)

King Cole Comments is the club's newsletter and this is issued three times each year. For a free copy, please send a SAE to Roy Holmes.

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary,

11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-899771, www.sinatramusicsociety.com/).

A quarterly magazine called *Perfectly Frank* is issued. Fees within the UK are £15 a year; £19 for European membership and £23 for the rest of the world.

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 003531 8212418).

Meetings now take place at 8:00 pm, second Monday of every month in the Talbot Hotel, Stillorgan, Dublin.

Books 'n' Bing

1. Gord Atkinson's Showbill - Volume Two: The Golden Years of Entertainment: Show Business from the Gaslight Age to the Space Age

By Gord Atkinson, softcover: 234 pages, ISBN: 978-0-9949336-0-7

Our own Gord Atkinson has published a follow up to his 1996 *Showbill* book and very pleasant reading it makes indeed. Rich Little provides a foreword and Gord then briefly reviews the decades from 1890 as a lead-in to 33 pen-pictures of some of the many celebrities he met during his career in radio in Canada. Stars such as Elvis Presley, Peggy Lee, Andy Williams, Pat Boone and Dorothy Lamour are just a few of the stars Gord has encountered over the years. He also looks at some of the icons of show-business like Jack Benny, Judy Garland, Jimmy Durante, Al Jolson, Glenn Miller, Caruso, Charlie Chaplin and Maurice Chevalier. In a section labelled "Epilogue" Gord considers a variety of subjects such as the top Christmas movies and songs, memorable quotes, real names of the stars and even a look at the fedora!

Bing pops up all over the place and there's a nice section entitled "Bing and Bob". This is nostalgia with a capital "N" which provides very useful facts and figures of some of the great stars of the past.

It is available online at:
https://showbill.wordpress.com/showbill-books/
or by mail at Gord Atkinson's 'The Golden Years', 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Stittsville, ON K2S 1B9 Canada.

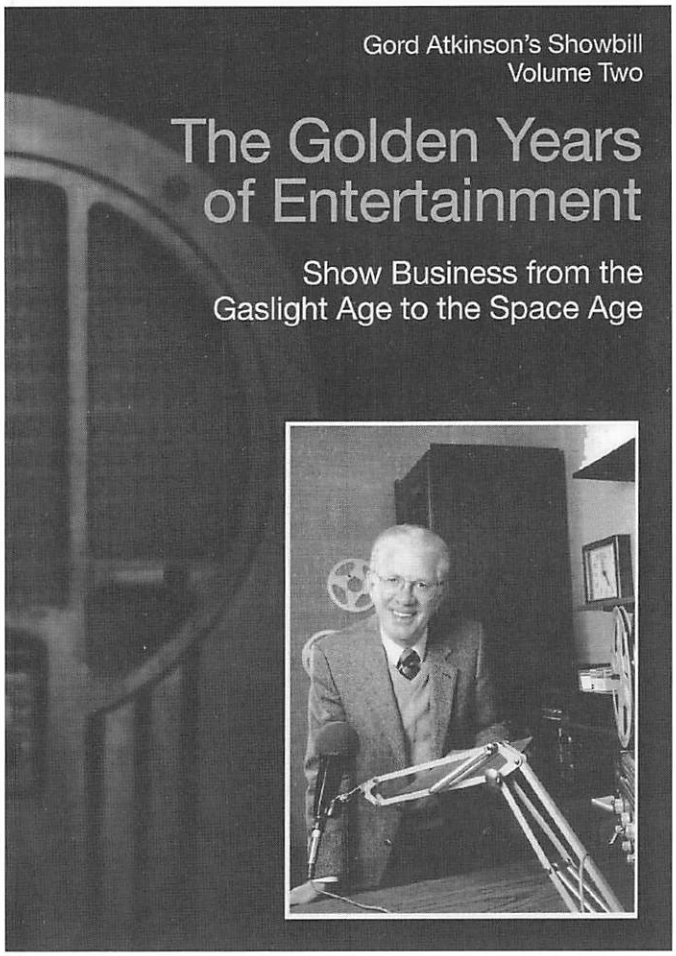
The cost per book is $25.00, Canadian or US funds, which includes postage.

John Curry writing in the *Stittsville News* added further information.

"...Gord has self-published this second book and so is now concentrating on its sales. He has been heard plugging it on radio and he is open to do speaking engagements with senior groups and service clubs. Gord praises his wife Elaine for working with him on the book, both as an editor and a typist.

"She's my beautiful right arm," he says about Elaine, adding that both books are as much the result of her efforts as his own. He himself wrote everything out in long hand, working at it every day for a year.

Gord, of course, sent a copy of this second book off to his long-time friend, Ottawa-born impersonator and comedian Rich Little who has praised the book as being fabulous. Rich has played a major role in Gord's books as many of Gord's interviews with show business personalities came about thanks to Rich's contacts in the entertainment industry. Indeed, Gord credits his access to show business celebrities more to Rich Little than anyone else. He calls Rich "a true loyal friend."


Gord Atkinson's Showbill
Volume Two
The Golden Years of Entertainment
Show Business from the Gaslight Age to the Space Age

Another boost for Gord's books came from interviews which Gord did in connection with his award-winning chronological radio series "The Crosby Years" dealing with the career of Bing Crosby and done with Bing's full support. It was released in 1975 and subsequently has been broadcast around the world. Gord even got to present the finished radio series to Bing himself.

Gord describes "The Crosby Years" as "the work of my life," acknowledging that he has been a Crosby fan ever since he was a teenager. He was active in a Crosby fan club as a teenager and met Bing for the first time in 1945, starting his long association with the iconic singer and entertainer. Gord calls Crosby the "most natural pop singer" and the one who set the style for vocalists like Frank Sinatra and Perry Como.

Another who was influential in aiding Gord in his interviews over the years was Ottawa-born singer Paul

Anka who facilitated some of the interviews. Indeed, Paul made his radio debut on Gord's radio show.

Bing Crosby played a role in Gord's early career in radio in Toronto where Gord, with the support of Bing, was able to arrange a weekly radio program playing Bing's records. This program, launched in 1948, was the only one in Canada allowed to play Bing's records.

Gord was eventually lured to CFRA Radio in Ottawa where he became a radio legend with his broadcasting work both with the teen-based Campus Club and with his show featuring the entertainment business. He was the MC for the Elvis Presley concert at the old Ottawa Auditorium which was Elvis' only visit to the nation's capital. He also served as the MC for the multi-million dollar fundraising concerts for the Ottawa Hospital featuring Frank Sinatra and Rich Little.

Gord is not expecting this second book of his to achieve the success of the first one but he is happy that it is now completed and published and is available for those who enjoy reading about legendary show business personalities."

John Curry

2. King of Jazz: Paul Whiteman's Technicolor Revue

In our last edition, we gave details of the restoration of this film and the book describing the making, release and restoration of it.

Author James Layton has an update.

> "We're excited to announce that King of Jazz: Paul Whiteman's Technicolor Revue is now available to pre-order! The book will be made available in a limited run from November 21, 2016 — one month after our generous Kickstarter supporters receive their advance copies. Please visit our new website for more information: http://kingofjazzbook.com/"

The cost is $50 plus $6.00 shipping to U.S. addresses charged at checkout, plus 6% sales tax for MD residents. Shipments to Canada are $17.00 and shipping to all other addresses outside the U.S. and Canada is $20.00.

3. Briefest Encounters

By Pip Burley, softcover: 334 pages, ISBN: 978-0-946894-08-6, Published by Quadrant Books, 2016.
Your Editor came across this book on a cruise. It was in the "swaps" section of the ship's library and it had been signed by the author. I had never heard of Pip Burley but I soon found out that during a career embracing music, publishing, advertising, theatre and television, he had performed in, written, produced, musically directed and directed a variety of works on television and in the theatre.

Through his company, Excelsior, he devised and produced *The Darling Buds of May*, starring David Jason and Catherine Zeta-Jones, and *A Touch of Frost*. His very readable account of the many celebrities he had come across included Bing and this is what he had to say about our man.

"It is not surprising that many well-known sporting celebrities take up golf - not only when they retire from their own sport, but often while they are still playing it professionally. The worlds of cricket, snooker, tennis, boxing, racing (both horses and motors) - to mention just a few - have all produced excellent amateur golfers, highly competitive professional sportsmen who are attracted to what might be regarded as the ultimate game of the mind rather than the body. They also know that they can go on playing golf long after their principle sport becomes too strenuous. I have met and had the pleasure of playing with many of them.

You might not think it quite so likely that the game provides committed recreation for another kind of performer, too. Those from stage, film and TV have always been attracted to the game, maybe for the very reason that it offers a refreshing change from the falseness of their everyday worlds. It is an honest sport that helps keep your feet on the ground.

I have always been a great fan of the legendary Bing Crosby and I remember going to see him at what transpired to be his last concert at the Brighton Conference Centre in October, 1977. In front of a packed house, together with Rosemary Clooney, his wife and daughter, Mary, backed by a full orchestra, he performed brilliantly to a standing ovation. In fact, by chance, I found myself right next to him as we left the Centre (the way the stage had been set up there was no exit for the artists other than to come down from the side amongst the audience) and, other than looking a little tired, quite understandably, he seemed in good fettle.

The following day he flew to Spain for a game of golf at the La Moraleja golf course near Madrid. He finished 18 holes - carding a very respectable 85 - and, with his partner, the club president, took the money off Spanish golf pros, Manuel Pinero and Valentine Barrious. After his final putt Bing shook hands with his playing partners, bowed to acknowledge the applause of some fans and remarked: "That was a great game of golf, fellas." As he was walking to the clubhouse he collapsed from a massive heart attack. Unable to break his fall, he landed head-first on the red-brick pavement, producing a large bruise on the left side of his forehead. "We thought he had just slipped." said Pinero. "Bing had shown no sign of fatigue. He was happy and singing as he went around the course." He was seventy-four.

I tell this story because it emphasizes how important the game was to a world-famous entertainer in the declining years of his life and career. One might have thought that at the end of an exhausting concert tour Bing would have chosen to put his feet up somewhere, probably on a beach lying in the sun. Instead, he preferred the therapy of the golf course to bring him back down to earth as quickly as possible.

What a way to go - a triumphant and (as it transpired) farewell concert followed by a win amongst friends playing the game he loved. I don't suppose many of us will better that for a perfect departure from this life, however tough it may be on those left behind."

Pip Burley

(pages 248-249)

Bing on the Big Screen

Martin McQuade has been very busy on our behalf.

Recently in New York, there have been several opportunities to see Bing on the big screen. In July, The Museum of Modern Art presented *Going My Way* and *The Bells of St. Mary's* as part of a Leo McCarey retrospective.

On September 28, Film Forum showed the newly restored *King of Jazz*, which, as the program notes, boasts "Rhythm Boy Bing Crosby's film debut." *KOJ* shared the bill with *Animal Crackers*. This double feature was part of Film Forum's series, "The Marx Brothers and the Golden Age of Vaudeville."

On Sunday, Oct. 2 Film Forum, one of Manhattan's foremost repertory film venues, showed a magnificent Technicolor 35mm archival print of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* as part of its laudable series, "Classics for Kids and Their Families." While viewing this spectacular manifestation, this reporter made note of the similarities this classic shares with DeMille's *Samson and Delilah*. In addition to showcasing DeMille stalwarts Henry Wilcoxon and Julia Faye in their casts, both 1949-released films feature identical passages of Victor Young's scoring (*Yankee's* opening banquet and *Samson's* temple finale scene use the same musical passages). Another observation occurred to me. Perhaps the car needed for the "Crosby picture," which triggers Norma Desmond's visit to the *Samson and Delilah* set in *Sunset Boulevard*, is the very same vehicle from which Bing exits in the opening scene of *Yankee*.

On October 1, The Historical Society of Rockland County screened *High Tor*, considered the first made-for-television movie, for a capacity audience at the magnificently restored Lafayette Theater in the very area in which the scenario unfolds.

This reporter participated in a post-film panel discussion, which included Jamie Anderson, grandson of playwright Maxwell Anderson. Information unearthed for my research shared on the panel included the fascinating tidbit that Stephen Sondheim, at the invitation of his mentor Oscar Hammerstein II, attempted an adaptation of *High Tor*, but the Anderson Estate refused permission. In addition, Bing was Twentieth Century Fox' first choice to play Captain Von Trapp opposite Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*. In addition, the planned Irving Berlin movie extravaganza *Say It with Music* was another tantalizing mid-sixties might-have-been that, as envisioned, would have reteamed the *High Tor* co-stars. Julie Andrews was unable to attend the screening, having just directed a possibly Broadway-bound production of *My Fair Lady* in Australia. She is also busy with a PBS series she has created in association with The Jim Henson Company.

The ghostly Julie Andrews watches Bing and Nancy Olson in *High Tor*.

My panel comments also included excerpts from Jonathan Schwartz' autobiography *All in Good Time* (Random House; 2005) in which he recounts the ultra-glamorous house-party hosted by his father, composer Arthur Schwartz, upon completion of the filming of *High Tor*. Kathryn Crosby recalled this event as she introduced *High Tor* when it first emerged from the Crosby archive after fifty-year hibernation and became a highlight of the Film Society of Lincoln Center's 2005 Crosby survey *What a Swell Party*, which yours truly served as guest programmer and curator. Here is Mr. Schwartz' thorough reminiscence of that long-ago gala.

Arthur and Mary Grey were giving a party for the wrap of High Tor. Here's what I learned to do: empty a coke bottle, pour in some Scotch and then Canada Dry club soda, then hold the bottle in my hand. A cinch. Julie Andrews showed up. She seemed to flow above the carpet, her long hair caught, somehow, in an indoor

breeze. She accepted praise with gracious amusement. When later she sang to Arthur's playing, she appeared to turn the color of gold.

Bing emitted the very sound of earth, with Arthur still at the piano. He emerged as a complete Bing, casual of gesture, a chuckler rather than a laugher, and clearly above the fray. Persuaded by my second Coke, I asked my father if I could accompany Bing on a song. "Naturally, of course," Bing said, in his resonant, modulated, familiar way.

I replaced Arthur at the piano. Gene Kelly was leaning into the curve of the instrument. There he was, with Cary Grant, Orson Welles, Fred Astaire and Oscar Levant. I knew "When You're in Love," cast in an Arthurian minor key. I gave it an introduction that delayed Bing's entrance perhaps 16 bars too long. Finally, he leapt in, which I understood to mean he was cutting me off. I had given him a winding Ravel slide into the tune, and I believe he was just making sure, as he entered, that I wouldn't decide to extend my introduction any longer. My left hand was respectful to Arthur's harmonies, and Crosby was complimentary when we finished.

"I'd say your boy's got a future," he told Arthur, who was standing next to the piano bench. "Let's do another." I took a long drink from my Coke, right down to the last drop. Waiting at the end of the bottle was Igor Stravinsky. With cape and cane, he had decided to call. "Mountain Greenery," I suggested. "A dandy choice," Bing said to me. "What's your key," I said. "Oh I'd say, let me see, B flat."

I couldn't play in B flat. Never have. "How about C? You get up there, it's not too high." What confidence, joshing with Der Bingle, picking his key even after he'd chosen one. "Let's give it a try," Bing said. Crosby stopped singing at the bridge, "You got Rachmaninoff here," he told Arthur, most pleasantly. I was given a muted, peculiar applause. Had I been brilliant? Had I been terrible? No one seemed to know except Arthur, who shot a cold glance my way.

The *High Tor* program prepared by the Historical Society included facsimiles of contemporary reviews and ads, as well as this reprint of a fascinating article entitled "Composer Uses Telephone for *High Tor* TV Score" by Charles Mercer, which initially appeared in *The Asbury Park Press* on March 8, 1956

<u>*Composer Uses Telephone for High Tor TV Score*</u>

While the piano is essential to composer Arthur Schwartz, he found the telephone a very handy instrument in writing the music for High Tor, a play with music starring Bing Crosby and Julie Andrew. It comes to the TV home audience Saturday on "Ford Star Jubilee." (CBS, 9:30 PM)

To go back a bit, High Tor is a mountain overlooking the beautiful Hudson River Valley. Playwright Maxwell Anderson took it as the location and title for his successful Broadway play of several seasons ago. It's the story of a contemporary guy (Crosby) who owns High Tor to the distress of his fiancée (Nancy Olson) falls in love with the ghost of a Dutch girl (Miss Andrews) dead 300 years.

The composer of such hits as "Dancing in the Dark" and "Something to Remember You By," Mr. Schwartz leads an extraordinary double life as a producer. In producing the filmed version of High Tor for television Mr. Schwartz says, "The composer in me sometimes struggles with the producer in me."

However, speaking only of the composer in Mr. Schwartz, there was no difficulty because of the fact that he was in Hollywood and Mr. Anderson, who wrote the lyrics, was in Stamford, Conn. Mr. Schwartz explained the other day this was the way they worked:

Mr. Anderson sent Mr. Schwartz the lyrics for a song entitled "Living One Day at a Time." Mr. Schwartz liked the title but didn't care for the lyrics. He composed part of a melody and then phoned Mr. Anderson across the country and hummed it to him. Mr. Anderson recorded the incomplete melody and within 24 hours phoned Mr. Schwartz new lyrics which the composer liked. So he completed the melody and the song became a reality.

On another occasion Mr. Schwartz, the producer, decided that Mr. Schwartz, the composer, must supply a new song within 48 hours for a special spot in the show. He telephoned Mr. Anderson in the evening and Mr. Anderson said, "How about the title, 'Sad Is the Life of a Sailor's Wife?'" Could Mr. Anderson hurry up some lyrics for composer Schwartz at the behest of producer Schwartz?

Sure, said Mr. Anderson. He telephoned the lyrics to Mr. Schwartz the next morning. Then Mr. Schwartz sat down at the piano and composed the music in an hour. When he proudly reported this feat to a CBS executive, the executive asked rather plaintively: "Why are we paying you so much for such short hours?"

Mr. Crosby himself is delighted with the tunes and the production in general, Mr. Schwartz reported, quoting him as saying, 'High Tor is something I'll be proud to have been a part of for the rest of my life."

The filming of the 90-minute show in Hollywood took only 12 days, an incredibly short time for a quality picture. Movie producers, hearing of the quick shooting time, came running to see how it was being made.

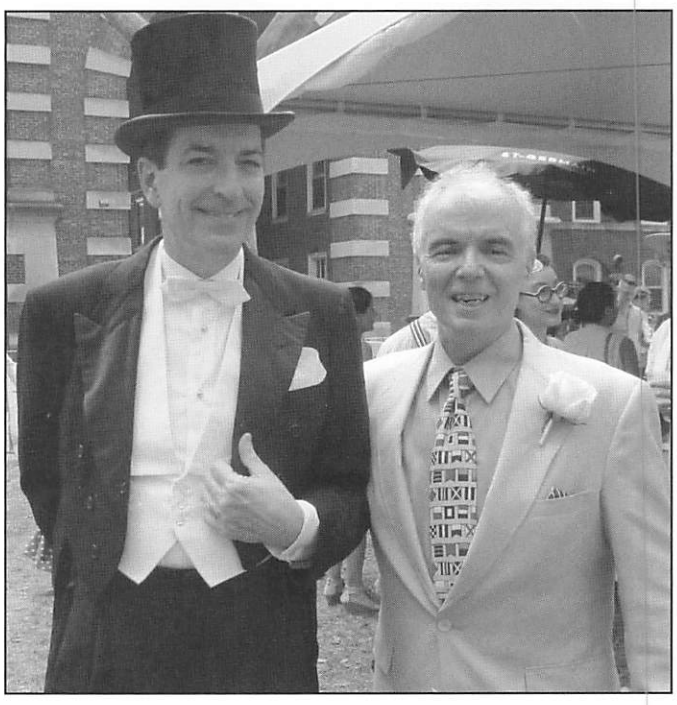
Mr. Schwartz credited director James Nielson for the quick shooting time. A noted TV film director, Nielson shot out of continuity and always had another scene ready while filming one.

The next "Ford Star Jubilee" assignment for Mr. Schwartz will be producing "Twentieth Century," starring Orson Welles and Betty Grable. Then he and Howard Dietz, who has written the lyrics for many of Mr. Schwartz' hits, will combine to do an hour and a half version of John Hersey's "A Bell for Adano," now scheduled for June.

One for the Ages

On August 13 and 14 Michael Arenella and his Dreamland Orchestra once again held beguiling sway over throngs of fans gathered on New York's Governors' Island to savor authentically performed music of the late twenties and early thirties. One of Michael's regular stellar attractions is debonair crooner Gregory Moore who performed two Crosby evergreens at these latest "Jazz-Age Lawn Parties." Gregory expressed to me his attitude regarding the musical treasury into which he so nimbly delves.

It's wonderful to have a platform at which the great songs of the first half of the 20th century can be showcased for a younger audience—many of whom have never been exposed to these masterworks of a style that's constantly at risk of laying fallow, lest we musicians keep them in our playlists. This summer, I had the pleasure of performing two songs that have a Bing connection: "I'll Be Seeing You" and "Dancing in the Dark". I truly consider it a responsibility, to keep the music of Bing Crosby and his contemporaries alive and regularly performed. I feel we musicians who perform this music are sort of "temporary caretakers" for these songs—keeping them in the public consciousness until the next generations come along to, hopefully, carry the torch in keeping this great music remembered—and loved. Those of us who are especially dedicated to Bing Crosby know that he was "one for the ages" and his place in the musical firmament is assured—but it's up to us to make sure that the singular brilliance that was Bing Crosby is kept in the often-fickle public memory...however, we can. It's up to us!



Gregory Moore with Martin.

Harking to a late Crosby classic, "Snowbirds" may experience "The Jazz Age Lawn Party" from January 13-16, 2017 in South Beach, Miami during the Miami Preservation League's 40th anniversary Art Deco weekend. Naturally, Mr. Moore shall warble - and wonderfully. For additional information, visit http://jazzagelawnparty.ticketfly.com/

Book Notes

Some Enchanted Nights: The Glittering Life and Times of Mary Martin (St. Martin's Press; 2016) by theater critic/historian David Kaufman provides insights into the diva's association with Bing. Martin once revealed in her memoir, "Making movies with Bing almost made Hollywood worthwhile. He is the most relaxed, comfortable, comforting man. No matter what happens he can ad lib, cover up, carry on." This echoes an internal studio memorandum, which described the duo as "a dynamite combination," the roots of which Kaufman identifies.

While shooting Rhythm on the River, (Martin's second film, which the author ranks as one of her best) *they made an astonishing discovery: Crosby used to regularly visit the Club Casanova, the small Hollywood night spot, to hear a girl sing Shoe Shine Boy. Only now, on the set, did he realize that it was Martin.*

Kaufman divulges the stars' respective pay grades. *Though she received the same-size billing as her co-star, Martin's relatively puny salary continued to demonstrate her lower-rung status at the studio: Martin was paid $20,416 in comparison with Crosby's $150,000. Helpfully, though, in addition to guaranteeing Martin $2500 a week, her contract stipulated that she could leave the studio every Thursday at twelve thirty to attend rehearsals and broadcasts of Dick Powell's Good News radio program, for which she was earning nearly half as much as her film studio guarantee-that is, $1000 per show-which, ultimately, she was obliged as a contract player to share with Paramount. Variety's response to the picture confirms that Paramount was carefully pursuing their wannabe star's potential. "She was more shrewdly dealt with by direction and story, and having gained much ease and sense of timing, greatly advantages herself in a piece which is right down her alley. She also has been much more attractively photographed."*

Although Bing and Mary appeared only once again on screen, (*Birth of the Blues* (1941)) there was the possibility of another film foray around the time of the Broadway production of *South Pacific*, according to Kaufman, by way of legendary Hollywood gossip columnist Hedda Hopper.

Having recently read a script by Clare Boothe Luce for a film that would reunite Martin with Bing Crosby (though apparently called Saint Anthony and the

Gambler, the film would never be made), Hopper sent Luce a letter, explaining why she didn't think it was right for Crosby or Martin. "I couldn't see...Mary playing a part where she was always angry with Bing." One can safely conclude that the envisioned scenario was far from frothy

Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is This? (Village Books; 1988) by Marion Meade sheds some light on the connection between the witty author and Bing, who is associated with two songs for which she supplied the lyrics: "I Wished on the Moon," introduced in *The Big Broadcast of 1936,* and "How Am I to Know," recorded with Buddy Cole.

Ms. Meade informs us that in 1934 Paramount contracted Parker and her husband, actor-author Alan Campbell. "On Sept. 3, they moved into the Paramount writers building, where they were assigned a comfortable, if seedy office. Dorothy and Alan worked on a Sylvia Sidney picture, *Here Is My Heart.* They were not informed of either the plot or the title of their next assignment. They were only told that 'the male lead will be played by Tullio Carminati or Bing Crosby. So just write it with both of them in mind.'"

Of course, *Here Is My Heart* does not feature Sidney. Either the author is mistaken, or perhaps is in possession of information suggesting that Sidney, then also under contract to Paramount, was the first choice for the role played by Kitty Carlisle. Regardless, a 2013 Huffington Post blog article by Parker scholar Kevin Fitzpatrick, "Dorothy Parker Happy In Los Angeles," corroborates that Parker and Campbell did contribute to the screenplay, which went into production just days before the writing team came on board. "Their first year in Hollywood, Parker and Campbell worked on *Here Is My Heart*, a Bing Crosby picture, and *One Hour Late*, a madcap comedy. Campbell sat at the typewriter, and crafted the scenarios. Parker was nearby, usually knitting."

A passage from Meade's book contradicts the title of Fitzpatrick's essay. "All through the year, Parker was gripped by a sense of dislocation. Waves of homesickness for New York came and went and later sent her rocketing from coast to coast. She reminded herself that nice people lived in Hollywood – she thought Bing Crosby was 'swell' and James Cagney 'the best person' – but nobody made up for the loss of old, dear friends."

In Meade's follow up volume, we learn a lot about one of those friends. *The Last Days of Dorothy Parker: The Extraordinary Lives of Dorothy Parker and Lillian Hellman And How Death Can Be Hell On Friendship* (Penguin; 2014) recounts how a legendary literary romance began, that between Hellman and Dashiell Hammett. "Their first meeting, in the fall of 1930, was unplanned. Certainly, she knew of his novels and his personal reputation as 'the hottest thing in Hollywood or New York,' but there was no conscious angling to seek him out. One evening, at The Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, attending a Bing Crosby opening with her husband and a party of friends, she spotted a tall, slender, expensively dressed man striding towards the men's room. With his shock of prematurely white hair, he cut a distinct figure. 'Who's that man?' she asked. Learning it was Dashiell Hammett, she bounded out of her seat and went careening after him, close on his heels. Before he reached the john, she grabbed his arm and fell into step, chattering as she attempted to engage him in conversation. What Hammett saw was a reddish blonde-haired woman, bosomy, with thin lips and a large nose. A stylish wardrobe and a fast-talking manner did not obscure the fact that she was no goddess in the looks department. When he emerged from the toilet she was still there, running her mouth. Her brash personality amused him. Instead of going back to their tables, they wound up in the hotel's parking lot, where they sat in the back of his car and talked until daylight. Hammett seemed under the weather. Unguarded, he confided that he was getting sober after a five-day drunk and felt lousy. Lilly later volunteered that they may have talked about T.S. Eliot. The rest she forgot or more likely wished to keep private. In the meantime the Crosby floor show had ended, and Arthur Kober [Hellman's husband] was left to return home without his wife."

The referenced Crosby performance may possibly be this event from 1931, cited in Malcolm Macfarlane's diary of Bing's life, *Day by Day.*

May 26, Tuesday. The Blossom Room of the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood reopens and many celebrities attend. Bing sings a couple of songs, Joe Lewis entertains, Con Conrad plays the piano and Sam Coslow leads the band.

A Last Link

On Sunday, Oct. 16, Jerry Lewis appeared at The St. George Theater in Staten Island, New York. For more than an hour "The King of Crazy," one of the last active links to Bing's world of show-biz, although remained seated, alone on stage. Nevertheless, he demonstrated amazing comic vigor and agility of mind. Jerry's flawless performance of his marvelous typewriter pantomime was a standout. He stirred gales of laughter by telling jokes in his favorite vein, the one - liner, sometimes punctuated by his classic idiosyncratic wheezing laugh. Film and TV clips offered tantalizing hints of his extraordinary career. The "Chairman of the Board" routine from *The Errand Boy* and the descending-the-stairs-segment from *Cinderfella* emphasized Jerry's brilliance. In fact, Jerry sang an a-cappella rendition of Harry Warren and Jack Brooks' "Somebody" from the latter and brought down the house. Milton Berle, Henny Youngman, Norm Crosby,

and Totie Fields, were among his friends and colleagues who appeared in his screen cavalcade. A song-and-dance duet with Sammy Davis, Jr. on "Pick Yourself Up" revealed a multi-talented star; and a sentimental television montage from the 1950's captured three generations as Jerry's father and son took hilarious turns singing "Sonny Boy" with him. The most touching moment came when Jerry screened the famous moment from his 1976 Muscular Dystrophy Telethon where Frank Sinatra facilitated his reunion with Dean Martin after a 20-year spat, which, as Jerry acknowledged, neither participant could in later years explain. Jerry spoke of his treasured post-reconciliation time spent with Dean toward the end of his life. Jerry ended by expressing his simple credo that we should all simply give thanks for our blessings, and echoed the closing lyric from "Somebody." *Without somebody, you're nobody at all.*

Martin McQuade

Bing Crosby finds on the internet

Frans van der Kolff has been doing some research online.

Like no doubt many others, I regularly surf the internet looking for new things Crosby. Next to regular radio programmes from your local or national broadcasters there really is a wealth of other programmes 'out there' on the internet. Indeed: I don't think there has ever been such an abundance of 'our kind of music' around!

More often than not I come across items which I feel might interest others as well, so here I am, sharing some of my finds with you.

Most items are audio or video podcasts which can be heard, seen or downloaded on your desktop, tablet or smartphone. Some may already know them - apologies in advance! - but maybe others don't. Beware: Here goes with a couple of hundred hours of Crosby listening and viewing pleasure!

1. An unknown hospital show with Bing

On a website named 'Rands Esoteric OTR' I came across an to me unknown 'hospital show', as it is labeled, which is assumed to be 'not a radio broadcast per se, since it was probably played over a closed circuit pa system'. The show features holiday greetings from Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Dinah Shore, along with the director of the Veteran's Administration. Bing and Dinah sing "Silver Bells", and Bing sings "Adeste Fideles" - both obviously prerecorded.

http://randsesotericotr.podbean.com/category/christmas-related/

When you scroll down a bit, you come to the item in question, named 'VA Hospital Christmas Show 1955'. By the way, there's much more Crosby-related material to find on this website. If you look to the right, you see there's an entry for Bing in the index which contains more interesting material.

2. An early 'making of' of the film *White Christmas*

Are you aware of the radio show 'Best of all'? The podcast of the broadcast of October 4th, 1954 features Irving Berlin and a very large part of the show is devoted to the 'making of' of the film *White Christmas*. There's even a short transcribed interview with Bing included.

http://otrrlibrary.org/OTRRLib/Library%20Files/B%20Series/Best%20Of%20All/

Please scroll down to the show of the given date.

3. The Bing Crosby podcast

A series of podcasts made by Tony Meade between 2010 and 2014. Numerous podcasts with a wide array of commercial and non-commercial songs by Bing. 'Give it a listen!', as the maker invites us.

http://macca-roni.podomatic.com/

4. Afterglow, jazz and American popular song

Afterglow is a weekly one-hour radio program of jazz and American popular song hosted by Mark Chilla and produced by WFIU Public Radio. Podcasts of the show go back to 2006. These are programs introduced by well-informed hosts covering the entire field of American popular song though, I must add, often from a jazz angle. Nonetheless, or therefore, you will find hundreds of songs by Bing in the programs. There are also several programs featuring Bing exclusively - just use the search function and you'll see for yourself.

http://indianapublicmedia.org/afterglow/

5. Bing Crosby at the movies

Janean Jorgensen takes us on a tour through Bing Crosby's musical movie legacy, with songs from *High Society, Anything Goes, Holiday Inn*, the Road films, and more in this episode of his podcast 'Broadway Matinee', dedicated to 'the one and only Bing Crosby, with his string of fabulous movie musicals showcasing his smooth crooning'.

https://beta.prx.org/stories/96160

6. Crooner history

Lowell Thomas traces the history of radio and TV crooners with the assistance of Rudy Vallee, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Eddie Fisher, in this rare 1953 TV performance. Bing sings and whistles "White Christmas" and jokes with Rudy Vallee. Bing's on film; Rudy Vallee is live in the studio. I have never before seen this fragment.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdLSdU-3M6E

7. Crooners: Bing Crosby

A programme on YouTube compiled by a certain 'Prof Davis'. No less than 2 hours and 40 minutes of Bing, alas not always in the best sound quality which is a pity, but enjoyable nonetheless, as the professor has made an interesting selection.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8d4aWpeJx6Y

8. Eighteen holes with Bing

Nathaniel Crosby discusses his new book in an edition of 'Golf Digest Podcast'. The introduction to the programme states: 'In addition to being one of the most legendary entertainers this country has ever seen, Bing Crosby was also the ultimate celebrity golfer. Crosby played nearly every day, was a member at 75(!) different clubs, and created the pro-am format that now exists at nearly every tour stop.' One learns every day.

http://www.golfdigest.com/story/golf-digest-podcast-nathaniel-crosby-discusses-his-legendary-father-his-new-book-and-hanging-with-ben-hogan

9. Lorne Harasen interviews Kathryn Crosby

While on the subject of interviews with Bing's family members, this interview of ICC member Lorne Harasen with Kathryn Crosby on Regina Community Radio, courtesy of CJTR Podcasts, dates back a little, to December 29th, 2014, but contains nonetheless interesting views on Bing. Lorne did a series of radio shows in the 1960's and 1970's on which Bing was a guest.

http://cjtr.ca/podcasts/?name=2014-12-29_lorne_harasen_talks_with_bing_crosbys_widow,_kathryn.mp3

10. Thirty Hours with Bing

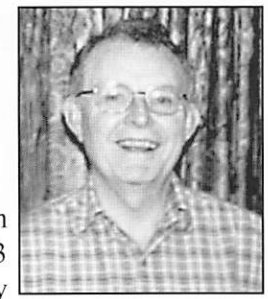
A series of 30 one hour programmes about Bing from WMKV, a public broadcasting station servicing greater Cincinnatti which claims to be 'a national leader in big bands, the Great American Songbook, standards, classic radio comedies and dramas, and oldies, plus important information and weather from Local 12 News' - well, I guess, you have to advertise to get heard! Unfortunately, of this interesting series only the last programme is still available and this leads me to the obvious collector's question: Does anyone have the other 29 programmes of this series?

http://www.wmkvfm.org/podcast/30bc/30bcHr30.mp3

11. The following podcast could be of interest too: http://merrypodcast.com/podcast/bing-crosby/ The presenter isn't really 100% accurate in his Crosby statistics, but the question raised in the podcast is, I think, an interesting one, posed by the presenter's 16-year old daughter: "How is it possible that Bing Crosby could dominate one season of the year not only during his lifetime but also nearly 40 years since his passing?" I found it interesting and entertaining to hear the presenter's answer to his daughter's question. Quite appropriately, the programme was posted on October 14!

Frans van der Kolff

Celluloid Crosby



This is Keith Parkinson's swan song after half-a-century and this time he looks at a film which featured one of Bing's greatest acting performances.

So often the publicity which precedes a film going before the cameras is speculative. The film studios want potential audiences to eagerly anticipate a forthcoming movie and gossip columnists are drip fed snippets of information. Accuracy takes a back seat so long as the production company and its actors receive column inches in magazines and newspapers. By the time production is underway readers have forgotten any earlier misinformation.

The Country Girl received an early mention in August, 1953 from columnist Sidney Skolsky when he wrote, "Bing Crosby will sing in *The Country Girl* and the title will be changed. [Paramount's] sales organization found out too many exhibitors believed it's a rural musical." The title change never took place. The subject was pre-sold because of the success of the play on Broadway, although the author, Clifford Odets, must have wondered why it was thought necessary to

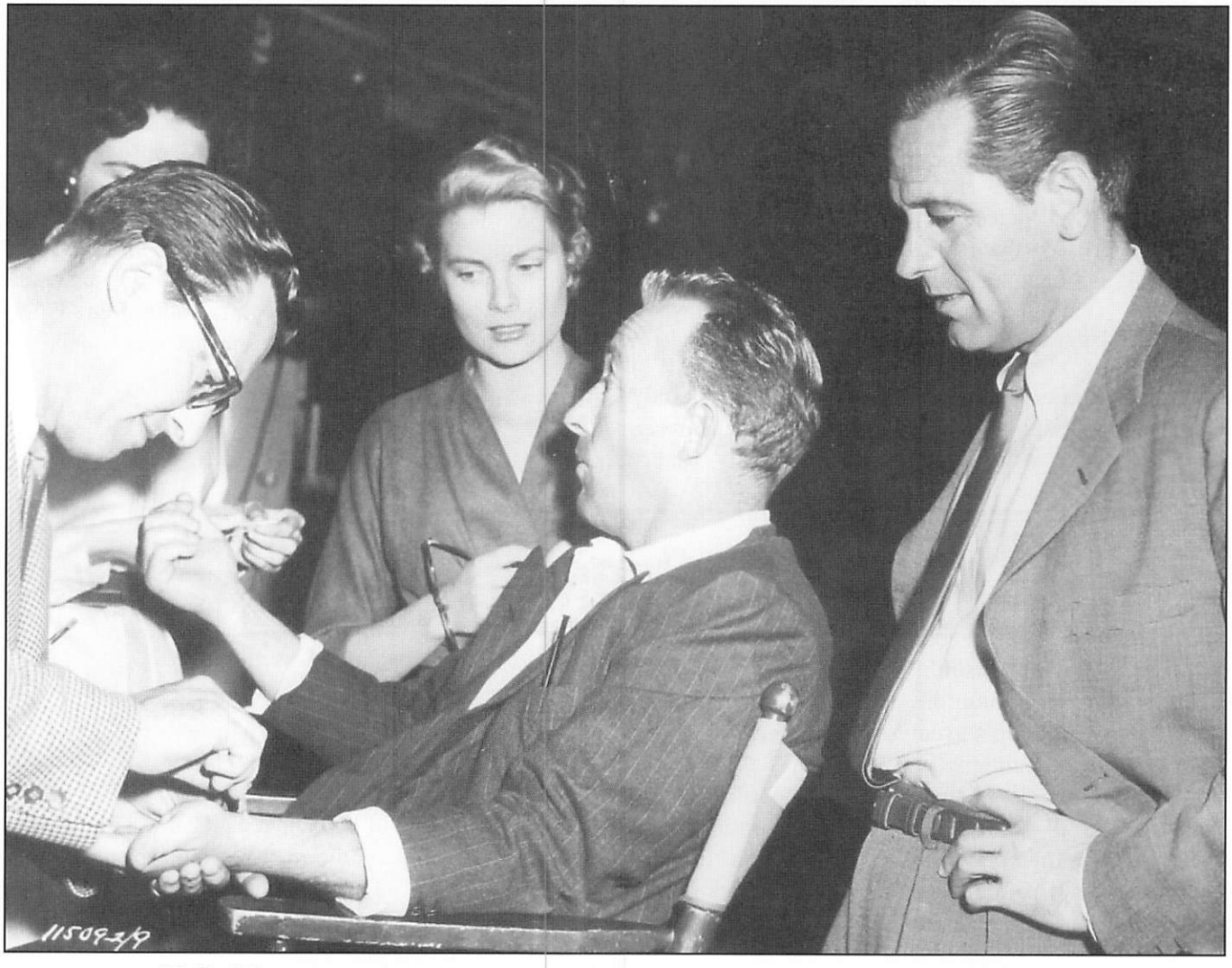
retitle it "Winter Journey" when it played in London's West End.

Sheilah Graham was a syndicated showbusiness columnist who passed on further information about the film at the end of 1953. "Jennifer Jones is committed for *The Country Girl* with Bill Holden and Bing Crosby...to start in March." Co-producer William Perlberg was indeed anxious for Jones to be cast following the success of *The Song of Bernadette.* Ten years earlier that had been a success for the pair with Jennifer Jones receiving an Oscar for her performance. The teaming never happened because J.J. became pregnant.

As for Jennifer Jones' potential to win another Oscar, Grace Kelly, her replacement, managed to cop the statuette for her performance in *The Country Girl.* Bing had not been enthusiastic when Grace Kelly was put forward as his leading lady. He'd witnessed her performance in the film *Mogambo* and thought the part of his wife in *The Country Girl* called for an actress with more fire. It was director George Seaton who assured him she was right for the part. He cited Kelly's performances in the two Hitchcock thrillers *Dial M for Murder* and *Rear Window* as evidence. After filming on *The Country Girl* was completed Bing said, "She surprised me all right. She's one of the most intense, intelligent and capable actresses I've ever seen in action. And I think she'll win the Academy Award."

Much has been written about the William Holden-Grace Kelly-Bing Crosby off-set relationships. Significantly, the three performers are long dead, which allows for more speculation than Paramount's publicity department could ever dream up. Bob Thomas was biographer to both Crosby and Holden and in his biography of the latter he asserts that Holden asked Bing not to compete for the friendship of Kelly. Robert Lacey's biography of Grace Kelly turns the story round. He tells us that Holden told Crosby he would not interfere in any relationship between Grace and Bing. We do have one quote in Lacey's book which comes from a source only once removed from the action. Grace's sister Lizanne offered: "He [Bing] really wanted to marry her. She called me up one night and said, 'Bing has asked me to marry him.' But I don't think she was in love with him at all." It boils down to this - the credibility of showbusiness biographers is on a par with film studio publicity officers. More significantly, Bing had been dating Kathryn Grant since the beginning of 1954.

We'll leave Bing with the last word on the subject of



Wally Westmore paints scars on Bing's wrists as Grace Kelly and Bill Holden watch.

female friendships. In a "Saturday Evening Post" article he stated, "If I were fifteen or sixteen years younger I'd fall willingly into the long line of males who are currently competing madly for her [Kelly's] favours." That was said about the time his friendship to Kathryn was building. She happened to be some thirty years younger than Bing. By the time *The Country Girl* was completed they were in a serious relationship. They were being seen together in public and were present together at the Academy Award dinner at the end of March, 1955.

The musical content of *The Country Girl* could easily be removed without detracting from effectiveness of the drama. Ira Gershwin (words) and Harold Arlen (music) wrote the film's four songs specifically for Bing. They were no Burke and Van Heusen as far as hummability was concerned. Gershwin confessed that he did not like to write individual numbers with popular potential. He preferred to compose several songs tailored to a theme which fitted in with plot developments. And therein lies the problem for me. "It's Mine, It's Yours", "Dissertation on the State of Bliss", "The Search Is Through" and "The Land Around Us" were not stand alone songs even though they were appropriately placed in the movie. The unappealingly titled "Dissertation on the State of Bliss" was written as "Love and Learn" until Gershwin discovered that there were already three songs with that name. One of the earlier composers objected, and although a song title cannot be copyrighted, Ira thought up the new title.

Gershwin's composer colleague was always reluctant to talk about the score of *The Country Girl.* He regarded "The Search Is Through" as the only song from the film which Bing had a chance of popularising. "Otherwise", he once said, "we didn't give it our best", which seems fair comment.

Arthur Jacobson was assistant to the producers of *The Country Girl.* He had previously been involved with a couple of Crosby films. He was the first assistant director on *Sing You Sinners* (1938) and *Little Boy Lost* (1953). When the directors Guild of America set up interviews for their oral history series, several hours were spent taping the then ninety-year old's memories. He was asked how he got along with Bing and recalled approaching him during the filming of *The Country Girl* and Crosby explaining that he wanted to leave the set at noon. It was because he had a golf date. Jacobson had a good working relationship with Bing and fixed an alternate shooting schedule. Jacobson's high regard for Bing was apparent in his comment.

> "I can go on all afternoon and tell you about the virtues of Bing Crosby. He was a wonderful guy but he had to like you. He wasn't the easiest guy in the world to get to know."

Jacobson also said he was responsible for persuading Bing to read the script. He knew that Bing was considering taking on more serious acting roles following his work on *Little Boy Lost.* He concluded his comments on Bing with, "He was a wonderful guy and I have nothing but good things to say about him." As for Jabobson's remark about persuading Bing to read the script, George Seaton - writer, director and co-producer of *The Country Girl* - said, "It's not true that Bing Crosby doesn't say the lines in his script. He says quite a few of them." Seaton was referring to Bing's habit of changing dialogue to suit his style of delivery.

When it came round to the Oscars, both Bing and Judy Garland were nominated as best actor/actress. They appeared together on "The Red Skelton Show" on 8th March, 1955. "Look" magazine voted both for top performance awards for *The Country Girl* and *A Star Is Born* respectively. It was a particularly stressful time for Garland. She was in hospital after giving birth to son Joey. The television network NBC set up equipment for a live link should she be declared a winner. When Grace Kelly's performance in *The Country Girl* won, the broadcasting apparatus was unceremoniously dismantled. Bing learned what had happened and, in an attempt to cheer up Garland, wired her: "I don't know about you, but I'm renewing my subscription to "Look"." Marlon Brando won the best actor Oscar for his role in *On the Waterfront.*

Summing up *The Country Girl* sixty plus years after the film was made, three issues are prominent:

- It was Bing's best acting performance on a film.

The songs are the least memorable of any of Bing's films.

- *The Country Girl* generated more column inches for gossip writers and biographers than anything he had done.

The End

Keith Parkinson k.parkinson1941@btinternet.com

(Editor: Thanks, Keith for a wonderful series of articles as well as your incredible "A-Z of Bing's Movies" which can now be found on the BING magazine website. The end of an era – but it's a pleasure to announce that David Lobosco will take on the role of looking at Bing's movies in the next magazine.)

King of Jazz – British Film Institute

Jeremy Rose reports.

On Saturday 8th October, the new restoration of Universal's 1930 Technicolor spectacular, *King of Jazz* was screened at the British Film Institute (BFI) on London's South Bank, as part of the London Film Festival

The main interest of this release to readers of this magazine, of course, is that *King of Jazz* contains Bing's first screen appearance, although he shares a single

billing with Harry Barris and Al Rinker as "The Rhythm Boys".

The film was screened in the largest cinema at the BFI and although there were a few spare seats, on the whole it was extremely well-attended. It was introduced by a lady from the London Film Festival who expressed her enthusiasm for the film, but also showed us - tantalisingly - what she said was the only copy of the accompanying book at present in the UK!

King of Jazz was filmed in early two-tone Technicolor with a production budget of $2,000,000. There is no plot. The film consists of a series of musical numbers punctuated with various sketches and novelty items, with the only linking element being the self-styled "King of Jazz", Paul Whiteman. It also contains the first example of a Technicolor animated cartoon.

The Wikipedia entry on *King of Jazz* details the various incarnations of the film since its' original release, with timings ranging from the 105 minutes of the original to a 93-minute version "cobbled together" for a video-cassette release in 1983.

The present restoration comes in at 100 minutes, which includes 2 minutes of play-out music. From the various YouTube entries for *King of Jazz* I've found three short comedy sketches which aren't in the new release. There were also a couple of items which were filmed for the original release but never made it into the final print. Other than that, this is as complete as we're likely to get.

I must admit that I've never managed to sit through the whole film as available on You Tube - the quality is just too variable - but the restoration is a triumph.

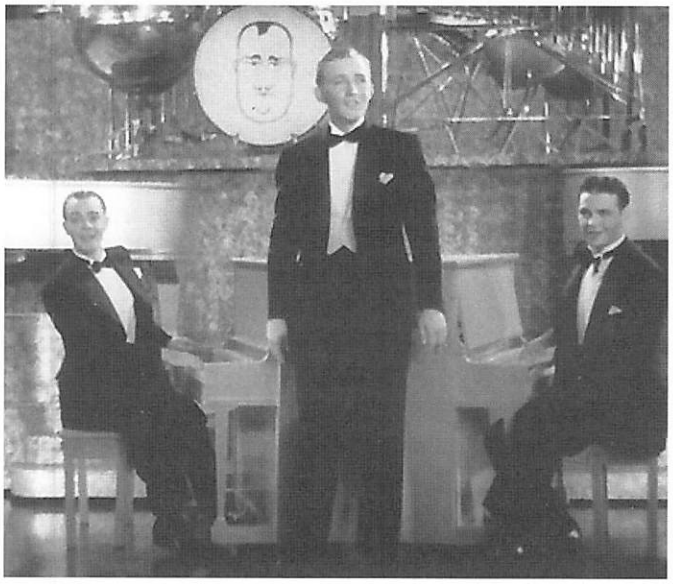
Although it's clear that the restorers were working with film-stock of varying states of preservation, the vast majority is an absolute revelation. There are some shots - close-ups of pianist Roy Bargy's hands in "Rhapsody in Blue" and Laura la Plante in the all-female news-room sketch - which really do look like they could have been filmed yesterday in High Definition!

The Rhythm Boys' numbers come up freshly-minted, and it is, of course, a real joy to see the young Bing - not to mention Harry Barris and Al Rinker - so completely at ease with the material and obviously having a ball. Bing also sings "Music Hath Charms" over the opening credits and briefly supplies the voice of Paul Whitman in the animated cartoon, singing "My Lord Deliver Daniel".

It seems unfair to continue singing the praises of this release when the majority of people reading this won't have had the chance to see it yet, (I can only hope that the next logical step would be a DVD release…) but I'll just list a few personal highlights - other than The Rhythm Boys, of course!

A few minutes into the film, Whitman introduces a few individual members of the band and Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang give a brief but absolutely sparkling performance, with a couple of great close-ups of Venuti's fingers skating over the violin's finger-board.

The Radio City Rockettes (billed as "The Russell Markert Girls") dance their opening routine - sitting down! - with a precision which would put "The Tiller Girls" to shame. (Sorry, that's a reference for UK readers of a certain age!)



The Rhythm Boys sing "Happy Feet".

I really enjoyed the John Boles rendition of "It Happened in Monterey", although I wouldn't swap it for Bing and Rosie on "Fancy Meeting You Here" nearly 30 years later!

The performance of "Rhapsody in Blue" is a fascinating historical document because the Whiteman orchestra had, of course, given the premiére of the work some six years previously with Gershwin at the piano. The soloist for *King of Jazz* - Roy Bargy - had his own Gershwin credentials in that he was the first pianist to record the composer's Piano Concerto in F, again with the Whiteman orchestra.

The old vaudeville skit with side-man Wilbur "Willie" Hall playing novelty violin and bicycle pump had me grinning from ear to ear and it was also interesting to see the young character actor Walter Brennan - who went on to win three Best Supporting Actor Oscars - in a couple of the comedy sketches.

And then there's "Song of the Dawn"…

This is the number which Bing was slated to sing, but was unable to perform because he was - er - detained elsewhere, and the honours went to John Boles.

I have to put my hand up straight away and say that, in my opinion, the song is much more suited to John Boles's style - as did Bing, apparently - and I think that if Bing *had* performed it, future generations of Crosby fans might well have put it in the same box as, "Hey Jude, Hey Bing!". As in, "Why did he do it..?!" Like I said, a personal opinion…

So there you have it - a few personal musings on

King of Jazz in its pristine new presentation. Given that a lavish new 300-page book has been produced to accompany the release, it would seem logical that we can expect a DVD release at some time in the not-too-distant future.

Let's hope so.

Jeremy Rose

(Editor: Many thanks, Jeremy. Also David Duncan, a long time Club Crosby member from Sydney, Australia writes to tell us that *King of Jazz* is to be shown in Australia too.

"You may already know this but in case you don't, the newly restored *King of Jazz* is having 17 screening sessions at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne over the Xmas/New Year. As far as I know these are the only screenings in Australia so if any Crosby fans want to see this up on the big screen they better book a flight to Melbourne. Hope to see some Club Crosby members there.")

On the ROAD Again - Celebrating Bing & Bob, 20th-century cinematic comedy masters

Pat McLeod writing in *Folio Weekly* (an alternative weekly newspaper published in Jacksonville, Florida) on October 12 took a look at the *Road* pictures.

Between 1940 and 1962, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope starred in seven *Road* pictures, which Hope's biographer, Richard Zoglin, called the "greatest buddy series in movie history." That's quite a statement when you consider Laurel and Hardy, the Marx Brothers, Abbott and Costello, and Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis. Despite his obvious bias, Zoglin still makes a compelling argument for the overall quality and especially the originality of the Hope/Crosby films.

More than 60 years on, the series holds up remarkably well, to which I for one can personally attest, having just watched them in the order they were released.

In 1940, Crosby was already a top star at Paramount's with at least 16 feature films to his credit. Hope, an established radio star, was a relative newcomer though he scored big in his first feature, *The Big Broadcast of 1938,* singing what became his signature tune, "Thanks for the Memory." Six films and less than two years later, he had his biggest hit yet with *The Cat and the Canary.*

The first pairing of the two 37-year-olds was *Road to Singapore,* Hollywood's biggest moneymaker of 1940. Hope was third-billed in this film; the second spot went to Dorothy Lamour, who played the love interest for both men in all the films but the last. Though Lamour was important to the comic mix, the ensuing films gave the two men equal billing, with Crosby's name always first.

Along with the final film, *The Road to Hong Kong* (1962), *Singapore* may be the weakest of the pictures, though it establishes the undeniable chemistry of Crosby and Hope. The film's major flaw is a backstory about Crosby as a wealthy playboy fleeing an unwanted marriage and bumping into Hope in Singapore. They get involved with Lamour in various con games to scrounge money. In between the comic stunts, Crosby croons tunes.

The rest of the films abandon all pretense of a traditional plot, opening with Crosby and Hope as hucksters of one variety or another, usually drawing in their dupes (and movie audiences) with an opening song and dance routine. It's in *Road to Zanzibar* that Hope first breaks the fourth-wall between movie audience and screen characters, one of the series' most original trademarks.

In *Singapore,* the fellas had escaped from some thugs by doing a patty-cake routine, knocking out the unsuspecting goons. They try the same gimmick in *Zanzibar,* but this time it's the bad guys who land the punches, prompting Hope to mutter, "He musta seen the picture."

These self-referential comments and asides to the audience (skewering everything from politics to Paramount, from Crosby's ears to Hope's nose), got more and more clever and hilarious as the movies progressed. In their own way, the *Road* pictures were every bit as revolutionary as the Marx Brothers' zaniness, only more consistent.

The next three films are generally considered the best. *Road to Morocco,* the fourth-highest grossing film of 1942, puts the boys up against talking camels, nasty Arabs and a relatively unknown Anthony Quinn as a villain. (The future two-time Oscar winner, sporting a pencil-thin mustache, was also the bad guy in *Singapore.*) The quips, the tunes, the nuttiness are all razor-sharp.

Road to Utopia, filmed in 1944 but released in '46, is the only period piece of the series, with Bing and Bob in Alaska during the Gold Rush. It was the only time Hope gets the girl in the end, but even at that Crosby has him one up. As old folks recalling their courtship and adventures, Hope and Lamour have a son that looks just like (and is) Bing Crosby.

In 1947, *Road to Rio* (the year's top-grossing movie) has the boys and Lamour up to the usual shenanigans, bolstered by a musical number with the Andrews Sisters and a funny cameo by Hope's radio assistant Jerry Colonna. Directing was Norman Z. McLeod, in his element, having overseen a W.C. Fields film and two Marx Brothers efforts.

Seven years later was *Road to Bali,* the only Road

picture in color. The film's most memorable moments are brief cameos by Martin and Lewis, a clip of Humphrey Bogart from *The African Queen*, and a conclusion with Jane Russell, Hope's co-star in *The Paleface* and *Son of Paleface.*

Hope and Lamour's "son".

In 1962, *The Road to Hong Kong* was full of cameos (Peter Sellers, David Niven, Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra). A 29-year-old Joan Collins was their romantic interest.

Plans were being made for *Road to the Fountain of Youth,* but Bing Crosby died in 1977. Enough was enough anyway, but thanks, guys, for the terrific memories.

Pat McLeod

(Folio Weekly is an alternative weekly newspaper published in Jacksonville, Florida. Founded in 1987, it is the largest and most influential alternative paper in Northeast Florida.)

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue

Nancy Graev, Marco Island, Florida, USA

A very warm welcome as our ICC's new American Co-editor!!! My name is Nancy Graev and I have been been a fan of Bing's since childhood. My father would sit me down and play his 78rpm recordings of Bing on his old Victrolo record player as I would listen and smile. I've been a huge fan ever since.

In the mid 1980's I began collecting everything Bing! After obtaining Bing's last album, "Seasons", I saw on the cover that there indeed was a Bing Crosby fan club. The album listed Priscilla Koernig as president. I wrote to her asking for information. She was so kind to respond, of course telling me that she was no longer president of BINGANG but directed me to the person who was. I joined and loved connecting with like minded people.

My collecting continued for a good twenty years however moving to a new home forced me into a difficult decision. Most of my collection was given away but thankfully to people who would appreciate it. I learned of a man in New Orleans whose collection was destroyed by hurricane Katrina. He accepted my records. The rest of the collection was accepted by Gonzaga University. I was happy.

I was very saddened to hear of Priscilla's passing in the latest issue of BING. Although we never met, if it weren't for her kindness I would have never been a part of such a wonderful organization! The benefits personally I can begin to describe. Even my adult children love Bing just as their grandfather did.

Patrick D. Sheppard, Jackson, Mississippi, USA

I love your book about Bing's daily activities. I've learned so much from it and often sit down and scroll through the online version. I didn't buy it when it first came out and now the only copies I see on Amazon books are very expensive, but one day I'll find a copy somewhere.

I've loved Bing since I was a small kid in the early and mid-1970s. I'm 49 years old, so I might qualify as one of Bing's younger fans. I think Bing is the greatest male vocalist of the 20th century, especially his vocals from the 1927-1947 period. I also think Bing is a great actor and don't think he gets the acclaim he deserves for his film work. His dramatic roles in *Little Boy Lost*, *The Country Girl* and *Man on Fire* are as good as work done during that period by the likes of Spencer Tracy, Henry Fonda, Humphrey Bogart, etc.

I'm a huge Sinatra fan as well, but he would come in second behind Bing for me, and I feel Sinatra's family has done a wonderful job keeping Sinatra's legacy alive. Sadly Bing is not remembered as he should be. I think

that all boils down to Gary's horrid book on Bing. His image never recovered from that book. Also, Bing's second family did Bing a disservice by not defending Bing's honor against Gary's book; I read the book and to be honest I don't think Bing was any stricter than many American parents of that era. I know in my family the stories I've heard about how my Great-grandparents disciplined my Grandparents would be considered extreme nowadays. I think Bing was a different father to the second family and Gary was very jealous of that and made up lies about Bing to get back at him and to destroy Bing's legacy. So sad!

I wish there was something that could be done to expose Bing to a younger generation. I thought Giddins' book on Bing helped out some, but that was around 15 years ago and it's taken too long to get the second volume out. Precious time was lost in exposing Bing to a larger audience. If you have any ideas of how Bing could be put over once again with the general public, it would be great to hear them.

(Editor: I agree with everything Patrick says. The Crosby family left it far too late to defend Bing but to be fair they did a very good job in the PBS special of a year or two back which is still available on DVD as Bing Crosby Rediscovered. Vol. 2 of Gary Giddins' book looking at the war years is promised for next year and hopefully will show what a wonderful person Bing was.

I wasn't sure whether Patrick was a member of the ICC so I wrote to him to find out and he responded as follows.)

...I wouldn't mind at all if you print my email. I used to belong to the club and let the membership slide at a time when I was terribly busy. I have just sent Wig Wiggins a check to rejoin. BING magazine is probably the best fan club publication I have ever seen. I'm also a major Beatles fan and used to be a member of Paul McCartney's fan club (he has since switched to a website) and your magazine on Bing is even better than McCartney's and his was top notch.

Yes the PBS special was very good and his family did step up for the occasion. I remember the second family kids from those 1970s TV specials. They were a good looking bunch, but I actually think the four sons from the first family were more talented and the older sons favored Bing more in looks.

Aaron Tickner, by email from Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Thought I'd bring something to your attention that I stumbled across on YouTube. Geologist Nick Zentner gives a lecture about the rock formations and ice flows throughout the state of Washington. Part of this lecture also shows the old roads between Spokane and Seattle and why they took particular routes. He takes a particular interest in the journey of Bing and Al Rinker in October 1925. Through photos from past and present we get to see how difficult the journey actually was. As state highways came into existence later on, the old towns that they passed through remain fairly much as they were from the early 20th century. Around 0.47 Nick mentions that the old cars had to reverse over a place called the Old Blewett Pass. Due the gradient, the old model Ts would conk out due to fuel not getting through the engine. Nick also speaks of some other interesting problems at this junction. He makes a strong argument as to a certain path they would have taken due to a new link having opened up the year before they commenced their journey. The other option would have been to cross the Columbia River by ferry.

See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTDCUqtTe00

This is a fascinating look at Bing's home state. My wife has always said she would take me there. If we do ever get there I'm driving the old Sunset Highway just like Bing and Al did. These old roads and locations are not unlike the back roads of Australia where you stumble across lovely old towns in which time has stood still.

Thank you for all your years of dedication to the magazine. Always enjoyed the efforts that you and your team have made for our pleasure. (Actually your time as editor spans the years of my membership).

A Note from Australia

Graham Pascoe writes from Bathurst, NSW, Australia:

Congratulations to you and Anton for another excellent BING magazine.

Keith Parkinson's amazing contributions are always informative and his article on *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* is fascinating. In Australia the press had reported the making of the film back in 1947 when *The Sydney Morning Herald* provided 'News From The Film Studios' to the effect that 'BING CROSBY steps into Will Rogers' shoes [a reference to Rogers' 1931 film] when Paramount begins a remake next month of Mark Twain's "A Connecticut Yankee"'. There was no reference to who might play the part of Lady Alisande as noted in Keith's article but just before the film was shown here in May 1949 the music magazine *Tempo* gave the film some publicity with an article headed 'BING CROSBY'S LATEST FILM IS A WINNER' and a photo of Bing and his leading lady Rhonda Fleming. A national radio program titled *Cinemusical*, featured soundtrack songs from the film on 1 May.

The first screening of *A Connecticut Yankee* was in Melbourne's State Theatre and one week later the Prince Edward Theatre introduced it to Sydney. 'Everybody's favourite star—Everybody's favourite story' was the headline in the theatre's advertisement in *The SMH* on opening day. Incidentally, in Australia its title was *A*

Yankee in King Arthur's Court. In 1949, many Australians might have been baffled by the word 'Connecticut'.

Keith Parkinson noted that the reviewer for *Variety* used the word 'pleasant' assessing the film. In Melbourne, Roberts Dunstan writing in *The Herald* considered, 'Little justice has been done to Mark Twain's fantasy ... but the colour and the mere presence of Bing on the screen will balance the scales for the Crosby fans'. In Sydney the review in *The Sunday Herald* suggested that the film 'seems to miss much of the jest' of Mark Twain's fable but the publication's Magazine section added, 'Probably the most natural American ever to saunter across the screen, Crosby plays the "Yankee" with just the right touch of amazed acceptance'.

The Yankee meets Sir Sagramore (played by William Bendix).

It did not enjoy a long run in Melbourne, where the State kept it for only three weeks. It did better in Sydney. The Prince Edward showed it for six weeks but its seating capacity (1389 patrons) was less than half of Melbourne's State Theatre. As a matter of interest, *The Emperor Waltz* had been shown at the same cinemas in 1948 with runs of four and five weeks, respectively.

As for the songs, few Australians would have been familiar with the Rodgers and Hart songs. How did they respond to the new songs?

The Australian Decca of 'Once and For Always' offered not Bing's solo version but the Crosby–Fleming duet. It was coupled with Fleming singing 'When Is Sometime?' which she had sung in the film. Ron Wills in *Tempo* the following month thought Fleming had a tendency to sing flat and that just about describes the sales the record achieved: around six thousand.

'Busy Doing Nothing' by Bing, William Bendix and Cedric Hardwicke, was backed by 'Twixt Myself and Me' sung by Murvyn Vye (but not used in the film). *Tempo* published Ron Wills' opinion, summing it up as 'a good time is had by all' for 'Busy Doing Nothing' but for Vye's song he wrote 'it doesn't rate very highly with me'. The record buyers didn't rate it very highly, taking only seven thousand copies.

The Australian Decca with 'If You Stub Your Toe on the Moon' was the biggest seller of the three records of the film songs but it was the 'B' side for 'Riders in the Sky' which became a number one hit for five weeks for Bing and for Vaughn Monroe in Australia. For seventeen weeks it was in the charts. 'If You Stub Your Toe on the Moon' was a lesser hit, with five weeks in the charts. The total sales of the Crosby record reached sixteen thousand by 1953 but the Monroe HMV sold more than twenty-five thousand before it was deleted.

A new generation of Australians was introduced to *A Connecticut Yankee* some decades later when it was shown eight times on television in the 1960s and 1970s, with the full title.

Lionel Pairpoint's 'But First....A Song' was definitely worthy of a reprint and the subject of Western movies and cowboy/country songs has considerable relevance to Australia. Australians were unable to hear Bing sing on the Kraft Music Hall broadcasts but bought his records of cowboy/country songs and heard them on their radios. Some of them became big hits.

Brunswick (Australia) had been releasing some of Bing's records in Australia in 1931 but the effects of the Depression meant that the company was in trouble. It was almost certainly out of the record business before the year ended. No new Crosby records were pressed in Australia in 1932 or 1933 but in March 1934 seven new Crosby records were released on the Columbia label.

The two records which were to be the most successful of the seven offered 'Home on the Range' (backed by 'Let's Spend an Evening at Home') and 'The Last Round-up' (backed by 'Did You Ever See a Dream Walking?'). In 1934 'Home on the Range' sold almost four thousand discs and 'The Last Round-up' sold more than five thousand. They were phenomenal sales figures for the time. Both remained on sale for over 20 years, achieving sales of 14,428 and 13,413 respectively.

In 1936 Bing's Decca recordings were released here for the first time and the coupling of 'Red Sails in the Sunset' with 'Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddle' became his best-selling disc for the year. It sold more than two thousand copies and almost four thousand by 1955. It was reviewed in *The Australian Music Maker and Dance Band News* of June 1936. 'Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddle' was summed up as: 'He has never

sung better … Crosby is still the finest vocalist of his type in the world'. It even went so far as to say that even those who dislike crooners should like Bing's 'Take Me Back to My Boots and Saddle'.

During the remainder of the 1930s three more Deccas of Bing's country songs were released and two sold well: 'There's a Goldmine in the Sky' and 'The Lonesome Road' with 'When the Bloom Is on the Sage' sold about four and a-half thousand each until 1953 but 'Silver on the Sage' did not move even one thousand discs.

During the thirty years from 1940 to 1969 Bing's county songs were impressing Australians. Twenty became chart hits of which ten were ranked by musicologist David Kent as being among the top twenty-five records of their respective years: 'Don't Fence Me In' was the top song in 1945, the others being 'San Antonio Rose' (number 5, 1942), 'Sioux City Sue' (5, 1946), 'Riders in the Sky' (6, 1949). 'Goodbye, Little Darlin', Goodbye' (8, 1941), 'Be Honest with Me' (14, 1942), 'I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes' (16, 1944), 'The Three Caballeros' (17, 1945), 'Riding down the Canyon' (22, 1945) and 'Feudin' and Fightin'' (23, 1948).

In 1956 Festival Records released a ten-inch LP titled *I'm an Old Cowhand* as a compilation of Bing's country songs including his 1939 recording of 'Home on the Range' which had not been pressed here as a single as the 1934 release mentioned above was still available on Columbia. It wasn't long before that 10-inch LP was replaced by a 12-inch version (which became one of the first LPs I bought).

On the subject of records, 'The Way We Were' is always an interesting reflection and '75 Years Ago' gave some attention to three songs which Bing recorded in 1941. How did they rate in Australia?

In the USA 'You and I' reached number five position and was in the hit parades for twelve weeks. The Australian Decca was backed by 'It's Way Past My Dreaming Time' by Rudy Vallée with the Gentlemen Songsters when it was released in April 1942 and that did not help the sales of the record. When it vanished from the catalogue in 1948 it had sold less than three thousand copies, the lowest lifetime sales of any of Bing's 1942 releases. Notwithstanding that, the popularity of Bing's 'You and I' meant that it almost made the charts before the end of the year. The Vallée song did not.

'Darling, Je Vous Aime Beaucoup' with 'The Anniversary Waltz', released in December 1942, became the third-top seller of Bing's 1942 releases until 1955. For Bing (and for Vera Lynn) 'The Anniversary Waltz' was a major hit, remaining in the charts for ten months but '*Darling*' was not until Nat 'King' Cole's recording put it there in 1955. Australians had to wait until June 1944 to hear Bing's 'I Wonder What's Become of Sally'. It was backed by 'Mr. Crosby and Mr. Mercer', which had been recorded almost six years earlier. Its sales were modest.

Bing's interest in golf became known to Australians early in his career. In 1938 *The Sydney Morning Herald* had a regular feature reporting from Lon Jones in Hollywood. On 6 March Jones' report named Bing as one of the best golfers among the stars. Bing 'goes around in the 70s', Jones said, and 'easily defeated Bob Hope, musical stage star, in a special match the other day. The wager called for the loser to work as an extra for the winner for one day'.

Sportsman Bing was aware that one of his Australian fan clubs was established in 1945 by the Sydney radio station 2KY. It was known as Australia's Bing and Swing Club but he may not have known that the club had two Bing and Swing rugby league football teams in Sydney's suburban competitions. The club jumper was white with a blue and gold 'V', chosen because of Bing's theme song, and the friends of a young Crosby fan Bob Walker 'thought it was a great joke, his playing for Bing and Swing'.

I've just read what appears to be a well-researched biography of Jerome Kern by Gerald Bordman (OUP 1980) which includes the text of the program for Jerome Kern's *Roberta* (slightly abridged) on its opening on Broadway on 18 November 1933. The program lists, in Act II, 'Roberta's Employees' Entertainment' including 'Travesty, "Don't Ask Me Not to Sing", followed by a list of vocalists beginning with Bing Crosby, Ruth Etting, Ethel Merman, Rudy Vallée and others. Beside each name is a member of the cast who presumably sang like the named vocalist: Neil Wood for Bing and a young Fred MacMurray for Rudy Vallée.

In all of the books I've read about Bing I've not seen such a reference. Interesting!

On a more sombre note, in August ceremonies were held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Battle

of Long Tan in the Vietnam War. Many Australian conscripted national servicemen fought in the battle. Kenny Grant was a 21-year-old 'nasho' machine gunner who was killed defending his position. He was a great singer, known to his mates as Bing, who entertained by singing to his mates at parties and occasionally on stage at a Brisbane pub. His rendition of 'Danny Boy' on a crackly recording was played at the ceremony at the Australian War memorial in the nation's capital, Canberra.

On television in August, *Going Hollywood* was shown on the pay-TV channel TCM and the national public broadcaster SBS showed three episodes of *The Hollywood War*, a French production (narrated in English). Episode 2 was titled 'Star Wars' and references to the film industry's contribution to the US war effort included the movie poster of *Here Come the Waves*, with Bing prominent, emphasising the role of women in what had been regarded as men's jobs. A filmed excerpt of a Command Performance concert showed Ken Carpenter as compere and Bing at the NBC mike was also shown.

Graham Pascoe **gpascoe34@bigpond.com**

(Editor: Graham's phenomenal knowledge of Bing's impact in Australia continues to amaze. One thing to bear in mind when noting the sales figures of Bing's records he quotes is that the population of Australia was as follows:
1935 – 6.8 million
1945 – 7.3 million
1955 – 9.2 million
It's about 24 million now.)

Of Bing I Sing

Lachlan McLean sent details of this Crosby tribute at the Mosman Art Gallery in Mosman, New South Wales, Australia on October 16. This is what Lynne Lancaster had to say about it in the Sydney Arts Guide on October 19.

The latest in the 'Cabaret in the Day' series at Mosman Art Gallery was *Of Bing I Sing*, saluting Bing Crosby (1903-1977), the legendary 20th century American crooner and movie star.

Recording more than 1700 songs, Crosby's distinctive warm bass-baritone voice made him the best-selling recording artist of the 20th century, having sold over one billion records, tapes, compact discs and digital downloads around the world.

Written and directed by Melvyn Morrow, it was presented as a dialogue between Glenn Amer ("the musical mastermind of Moss Vale") who has "the fingers of Liberace and the voice of Mario Lanza" and a collection of 378 78rpm format style recordings of Crosby - and Rob Palmer, star of *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Dancing with the Stars*.

Amer at the shiny black piano was dressed in a dapper suit, Palmer in front of a large black and silver mike was far more casual in a t-shirt and denim. Palmer was tanned and had a dazzling cheeky grin. Palmer had a long introductory monologue explaining how the two met.

The piece was not really biographical per se rather a voyage of discovery through a collection of some of Crosby's songs. Some facts were mentioned (and statistics rattled off) about his records and his 53 various movies (especially the "Road" movies with Bob Hope). Crosby's private life was briefly mentioned too.

Mostly however it was the songs... Palmer and Amer jumped around chronologically but we heard for example *Blue Skies* and *You've Got Me Where You Want Me* towards the start of the show and the catchy *Alexander's Ragtime Band* which had everyone bopping along. They were followed by *Play a Simple Melody.*

We then heard *Don't Fence Me In* and from 1949 *Ghost Riders in the Sky.* This was followed by the poignantly beautiful *Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral* (That's an Irish Lullaby) and the extremely moving *Galway Bay.*

Amer then charismatically sang *Danny Boy* which led to a hot tango like *Amor Amor Amor* that the audience absolutely loved.

We then jumped to *I Love Paris* which segued into in the infectious toe-tapping *In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening* (from the 1951 film *Here Comes the Groom*).

1944 was a big year for Crosby with at least three hits – *I Love You, I'll Get by as Long as I Have You* and the romantic ballad *I'll Be Seeing You.*

Palmer talked about Crosby's image as Mr Nice Guy – but was he? (not according to one of his son's books ..) The led to a fiery, seductive Latin-American style *Temptation* by Amer that sizzled and the audience absolutely adored. The mood then changed to *True Love.*

Palmer briefly talked about Crosby's extremely successful career which led to a delightful most impressive medley by Amer of some of his other hits. We then leapt to *Love Thy Neighbour,* followed by *Would You like to Swing on a Star* and *We've Only Just Begun.*

Much was then made of *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas* with the audience singing along. According to Guinness World Records, Crosby's recording of *White Christmas* has "sold over 100 million copies around the world, with at least 50 million sales as singles."

There was a hushed silence as we listened to Amer's 78 copy of Crosby singing *Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive* on Amer's portable gramophone. That led to the final song *Now Is the Hour.* The audience went wild and for an encore we had the exuberant *McNamara's Band* with the audience singing and clapping along.

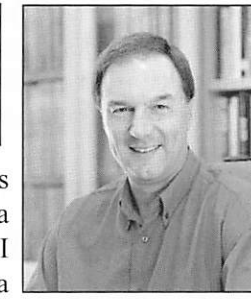
Melvyn Morrow then introduced *Zach Selmes* who performed a song or two to wet our appetite for his concert the next in the series *Poisoning Pigeons in The Park*.

Running time – just over 90 minutes (roughly) no interval

Lynne Lancaster

CROSBYANA

Ken Crossland looks back at his "firsts".



One of my most treasured memories is of my father telling me of how, as a young man living in London in the early Thirties, he went along with his brother to a western-style rodeo at the White City Stadium. White City was best known as London's premier greyhound racing stadium, but this night, the dogs were replaced by bucking broncos as London sought to bring a flavour of the American west to dear old England. The highlight though, my dad told me, wasn't the riders or the horses. It was the sound of Bing's rendition of "The Last Round Up" echoing around the stadium from the giant Tannoy speakers.

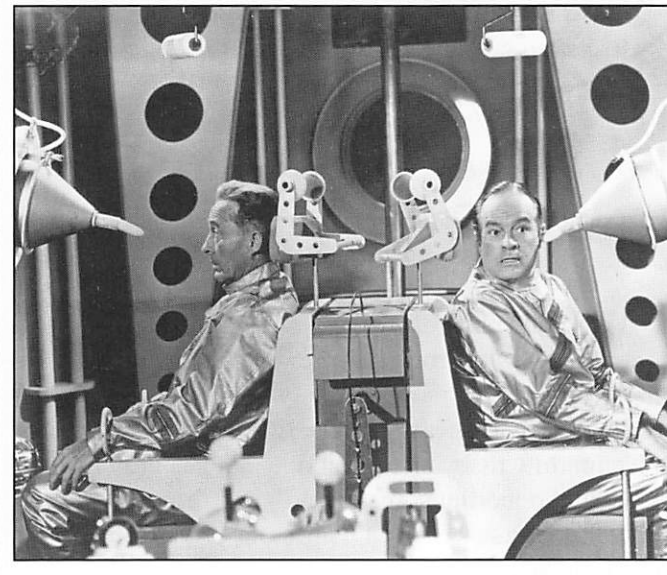
Bing's repertoire contained a fair few songs that featured the word "last" in their titles - "The Last Mile Home", "At Last", "Last Night on the Back Porch" from the Bob Scobey album, and of course, the wonderful KMH gem, "If It's The Last Thing I Do". In contrast, songs that featured the word "first" in their title are much harder fish to catch. Indeed, if you set aside the Crosby Christmas catalogue and thus "The First Noel", "The First Snowfall" and "The First Family of Christmas", you have to go to Bing's final recording session, for the *Seasons* album, to find a song that features that word. "On The Very First Day of the Year", a then new song, written by Ken Barnes and Pete Moore, might have been something of a makeweight for the LP but it filled a surprising gap in the Crosby song catalogue.

"Firsts" are of course, a great thing to look back on for anyone who enjoys a lifelong hobby or passion. If, like me, Bing has been a central feature for most of your life, there is no shortage of happy memories to be conjured simply by allowing the mind to track back through some of those milestones. Where to start? Well, I guess the jumping off point must be the first time you became aware that someone called Bing Crosby existed. It's a tough one because awareness is one of those things that creeps up on you without there ever necessarily being a 'Eureka!' moment, but I'm pretty sure that for me, my first exposure came when my dad took me off to the local cinema to see *The Road to Hong Kong* during its initial release. That would be late 1961 or early 1962, I guess, and the one scene I remembered was Bing and Bob being force fed bananas in the space rocket, having taken the place of the chimps who were lined up to make the flight. And that's where it all began.

My first Crosby record came in 1964. A modern record player, as distinct from the wind-up antique that played 78s only, arrived in our house during the summer of 1966 too and my Christmas present to my mum that year was a Brunswick 45 of "Silent Night". I remember making the choice in a record shop in Leeds, between that and "White Christmas". Like every child, I knew the carol "Silent Night" but I had never heard of "White Christmas"! There was indeed a long road ahead.

First time I saw Bing sing? Well, I must have seen him in *The Road to Hong Kong,* but the first time I can remember would be around 1966. It was either *The Andy Williams Show* or *A Little Bit of Irish*, both of which were shown on UK TV at that time and needless to say, my mum was glued to the screen watching her idol.

My first record for my own consumption? That came a year or two later and was the Ace of Hearts budget LP *Among My Souvenirs.* My first 78? "Y'all Come", rescued from a junk stall at the back of Leeds market. The first time I saw Bing in person? - the BBC *Parkinson* recording in August 1975 - and the first and only time I met Bing, well that came on the last night of the London Palladium season in October 1977. Six days later, he was lost to the world.



Fast forward almost 40 years then and I'm delighted to report that 2016 has brought another Crosby first. A summertime trip to the Pacific Northwest presented the opportunity to visit Spokane for the first time and how pleased I am to be able to add that to my list. Of course, I had seen photos and read about the town, Gonzaga University, St. Aloysius Church and all that goes with it, but such things never really come to life until you set

foot on the ground. I was amazed to find that the beautifully preserved and restored Crosby house sits within sight of both the University's portals and the church itself, whilst the famous statue of Bing sits just around the corner. And having started my land journey close to Bing's birthplace in Tacoma, the scale and difficulty of the 350-mile journey that Bing's parents and their children made during the hot summer of 1906 - long before cars and interstates - leaps out as one of epic proportions.

Ken admires Bing's statue

The University of course is not just Bing's *alma mater* but also the proud home to the Crosby archive, of which our host, the University archivist Stephanie Plowman, gave us an illuminating tour. It is a rich collection of Crosbyana, albeit one that has grown in an ad hoc and opportunist manner. It's not the only Crosby archive of course - each of us has our private collection and of course, we know now of the rich content of the "Basement", Bing's personal collection from his home near San Francisco. It would be nice to think that one day, all of these individual treasures troves might sit together in a genuine Bing Crosby Library, properly funded and sitting for the ages as the true resting place of the artistic legacy of the greatest popular singer who ever lived. A visit there would make a fitting last "first" to my list.

A few issues back I threw down a challenge on behalf of my mum, then 96, and who had just marked 80 years as a Crosby fan, from the day she saw *We're Not Dressing* in 1934. She had asked me if I knew whether she was the world's oldest and longest living Crosby fan. I was pleased to be able to tell her that my challenge had brought no counter-claims and that, as far as I was concerned, the title was hers. Sadly, her own epic journey ended this autumn at the age of 98, but as far as she - and I - was concerned, she died undefeated.

Ken Crossland

THE MAGIC OF BING

Being a Crosby fan in Sweden was hard work. Lars Roth remembers his early struggles to build a collection.

I remember it well…Or do I? It feels like I've lived with Bing my whole life. My dad loved Bing and collected records in his youth. However living in Sweden, it wasn't that easy getting hold of the 78s (known in Sweden as "stenkakor" i.e. stone cakes), certainly not in those days and for sure not during the war (WWII).

Growing up I listened to a lot of Bing. My favourite record was "How the West Was Won", with all those cowboy songs. Even in Sweden we played cowboys and Indians. Today I don't think kids even know about cowboys. 20 years later I learned it wasn't the complete LP as it actually was issued as a double LP. It took me several years to get hold of the complete set. Not only did it have a lot more songs on it, but some songs like "Shenandoah" even sounded different. By then my dad's old record both looked and sounded awful so it was about time to replace it anyway. Today it's even available on CD from German Bear Family records.

The story behind the "HTWWW" record always interested me. It started with articles in the Saturday Evening Post. Then came the Bing Crosby record, which led to Hollywood knocking on Bing's door, offering Bing a part in the movie "HTWWW ", which he declined. Still I've always loved that all-star movie even without Bing in the cast. Even a soundtrack record was released with some of the same songs that appeared on the Bing record – a later version added Spencer Tracy's voice to the record. Western writer legend Louis L'Amour turned the story into a book. Country singer/actor Sheb Wooley (better known from the TV show "Rawhide" or his recordings as Ben Colder) also made a record with songs from the movie. Much later a pilot produced for television was released, based on the same story starring James Arness. This resulted in a TV series that was very popular in Sweden, everybody here

knew about Zeb Macahan (the James Arness character, however knew nothing about Matt Dillon).

Growing up I had to settle with the records in my dad's collection, which did not add up to that many actually, 78's, 33's and 45's. I remember some soundtracks on EP from *The Country Girl* and *Going My Way*.

The Swedish sheet music for "Swinging on a Star".

In many cases we didn't have the LP's, but only a few 45's, like two parts of "Fancy Meeting You Here". An LP had to be divided into 3 EP's and you didn't always manage to get them all. At least my dad didn't. On LP I listened to "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling", "High Society", and "New Tricks". I always loved the cover of "New Tricks", with the basset hound. I often wondered if my parents didn't start getting basset hounds because of this record. They kept getting one basset after another, although none of them smoked a pipe or wore hats. My dad also had a 45 record of the Gang songs, I especially loved the Bob Scobey and Buddy Bregman recordings.

I still played my dad's 78s a lot. My favourite 78 had been broken but I still played it; 'Till the End of the World/Just a Little Lovin'. I also liked "Nobody", which I much, much later learned was taken from a radio show. Among my other favourites were "I Didn't Slip, I Wasn't Pushed, I Fell" "Shanghai". Along with "Who's Sorry Now", "When Day Is Done", "Just One of Those Things" and "I Cried for You". Of course at that young age I understood nothing of the words. Many years later I noticed, to my surprise, that a bunch of 78's had been hidden inside one of the boxes where many 78s were kept. I discovered several Bing records and among them; "Bonne Nuit"/ "Your Own Little House", "At Last, At Last", "Baia", "Let Me Love You Tonight".

It's always a delight when you find new Crosby recordings. Sometime later I also bought a few records at a flea market; "Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo", "Changing Partners", "I Cross My Fingers" and also Louis Armstrong and Gary Crosby in "Struttin' with Some Barbecue". Unfortunately by then I didn't have a working record player for 78s and it would take years before I could listen to them. In the 1990's a friend of mine and I transferred all my 78's to a computer, made some audio restoration and put them on CD's.

I was born early enough to enjoy some of the fifties i.e. the last two months, but it wasn't until the late 70's that I started searching out Crosby records on my own. Actually I only started finding records on my own about the time Bing recorded "That's What Life Is All About". My younger brother went to London on a school trip and picked up "At My Time of Life" for me. I managed to find the rest of his later records in Sweden. I seem to be among the few who really enjoy the album "Feels Good, Feels Right". It's something about both the arrangements and the choice of songs that suits me and have a nice ring to my ears.

Regarding the two Paul Smith collaborations, a friend who knew a lot of international jazz musicians, told me that when he met Paul Smith he had nothing but kind words to say about Bing. While I enjoy both "Bingo Viejo" and "A Southern Memoir" I always felt something was missing. I didn't enjoy all the arrangements, nor did I think it necessary to re-record songs that Bing made years before. About the same

time I found a very old record store in Malmö, which had a lot of very old records in stock, a bunch of old Crosby releases from the 60's and among them the Gang song records. Oh happy day! Actually, the last Bing record my dad bought was "Hey Jude". A record I actually enjoy a lot and I like the cover too. Ah those were the days… I remember it well.

Through the years I kept picking up a record here and there. On my first trip to the USA, shortly after completing my military service, my luggage broke down after a visit to a record store in San Francisco, where I found 20-30 new records. I had to buy new luggage which eventually also broke, so I had to have it repaired in New York, before returning home. Years later on a London trip, I once again found more Crosby records than I could afford or carry. I had to live on bread and water for months. When my uncle worked in London for a while, he got me some recordings, among them "That Travellin' Two-beat" and a Crosby and Mercer collection. I also got in contact with other Crosby collectors in other parts of Sweden, for example Ragnar Uppman who sent me "Holiday in Europe" just to prove a point in a discussion we had. Early on I learned that Crosby collectors are very nice people, who are always willing to help out.

There were a few Scandinavians singers that were quite good and obviously influenced by Bing.. They mostly sang Swedish or Danish versions of the international hits. Worth mentioning is "the Danish Bing Crosby" Gustav Winckler and from Sweden Gunnar Wiklund. Both died all too young, Winckler died in a car crash and Wiklund suffered from cancer and both died in their early fifties. Germany was a huge market for Scandinavian artists and when they initially marketed Gustav Winckler, they renamed him Gunnar. I heard the reason being that Gustaf was the name of the person responsible for tapping phones in Nazi Germany. Every time Germans used the phone they jokingly started by saying: "Hello Gustaf!", so it was decided Gunnar was a better name for Winckler. You can find some of their recordings on YouTube.

I listened to the "High Society" soundtrack a lot. It was one of the very few Crosby movies ever shown on TV in Sweden or Denmark. Those of us living in southern Sweden were blessed with being able to watch Danish TV too. Sweden only had one TV channel until the late sixties, when a second channel was introduced. It was a rough life way back then, before video I had to settle for taping the sound from the TV. At least I could listen to *High Society*, *Road to Rio* and *The Bells of St. Mary's* and imagine the picture. Those were the only movies that showed up on TV in my youth.

When Bing died in 1977, Danish TV showed his last Christmas show as a tribute. That's the main reason my dad bought a VCR, in time to record it. It was a Philips VCR with a large tape with maximum running time 60 minutes. I managed to record "Bing's Merrie Olde Christmas". Shortly after that, Swedish television reprised Bing's part of the Norwegian Momarkedet concert. It was actually a huge show, with many mediocre Scandinavian artists, before Bing finally appeared to save the day. Danish TV followed up by showing *High Society* in the weeks that followed, and Swedish TV screened *The Bells of St. Mary's* around Christmas, and that was my whole Crosby collection on video for years.

A British friend who had moved to Sweden, because of a girl, managed to tape some Crosby movies when he visited his dad in Liverpool. On one vacation in London I noticed *Rhythm on the River* would be shown, so I stepped in to a TV/Video store and asked if they could record it for me. Fortunately they did! Thanks to Bob Machliss in Australia, I got copies of many of the early thirties movies, several that even my dad had never seen before. It was fantastic! Other wonderful Crosby collectors in USA later helped out with most of the rest.

Many, many years ago I wrote an article about Bing's Norwegian concert for the BINGANG magazine. Thanks to that I was contacted by Richard Pearson in Virginia. We corresponded back and forth for years and I also visited him and his wife Barbara in the US once. He gave me some much appreciated Crosby memorabilia, along with a copy of the autobiography "Call Me Lucky", that I had wanted to read for years. My dad often told me that when he was young he had bought all the Saturday Evening Posts to get each and every instalment of Bing's book. His mother had thrown them away when she cleaned out the house years later and I still haven't forgiven her. Anyway, Richard put me in contact with Bob Machliss in Australia.

Some of the Lars Roth collection.

Thanks to my interest in Bing, I've had the pleasure

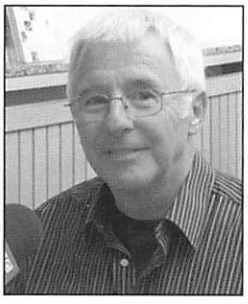
of getting to know a lot of interesting and nice people. In the 90's I befriended a few people who owned record stores, who also shared my interest in movies and we started a movie club. Through the members I also got to know various journalists and persons involved with radio. This led to me making a couple of radio shows, the first one of course entirely about Bing. When the movie club got together, I certainly always showed Crosby-movies, especially the earliest movies that I knew the other members had never seen. One of the members called them "Bing's Elvis Presley movies". I'm not sure he meant it as a good thing? He also collected Crosby, but his absolute favourite was Dean Martin.

Another member, Alfie, who owned a record store, had Sinatra as his number one guy. All this meant we needled each other all the time. Alfie, who usually preferred Sinatra, frequently admitted that Bing made better records than Sinatra during their later years, and he also thought that Bing picked songs and arrangements that better fitted his voice than Sinatra did, who kept singing like he believed he had the same voice as in his youth.

This is how I started collecting Bing, and I have never stopped collecting. If you, like me, are interested in not only music, but also movies and TV, there is no better artist to collect. I knew nothing about that when I as a kid and got captured by his voice, not even knowing what he sung about. I think that says a lot about the magic of Bing.

Lars Roth

BING ON THE BOX



Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights - USA & Canada

A wonderful celluloid goldmine on TCM this time as you will see.

Blue Skies	TCM
Connecticut Yankee	TCM
Going Hollywood	TCM
Going My Way	TCM
High Society	TCM
High Time	FXM
Man on Fire	TCM
Pennies from Heaven	TCM
Rhythm on the Range	TCM
Road to Morocco	TCM
Robin and the 7 Hoods	TCM
Scared Stiff	TCM
Sing You Sinners	TCM
The Country Girl	TCM
The Road to Hong Kong	TCM

Michael Feinstein was the host on TCM in August and it was no coincidence that an incredible 13 Crosby films were shown one after the other starting on August 3rd. Wonderful!

Jim Kukura commented on this bonanza on the Crosby Fan World site.

"I don't know about anyone else, but I had a blast. Got to see almost everything, but only parts of the last three. Like most of you, I have all Bing's films in my private film library and can watch them anytime I want. The problem is that I very seldom do that. But when I know millions of others are watching the film at the same time as I, it just adds a special satisfaction to the viewing. I was a bit disappointed that there were no introductions to the films by TCM hosts until, I think, *Going My Way* was about to be aired. Michael Feinstein certainly showed his true enthusiasm for Bing and his films and singing when he did make opening and closing remarks. And it was very coincidental that I was reading the article about Rhonda Fleming in my newly received BING magazine at the same time as I was watching *Connecticut Yankee*.

Which glass is which?

I always find something new or rediscover something when I watch these films, especially if I have

not viewed them in some time. My something new is that in the *High Society* film when Bing and Frank are singing, "Well, Did You Evah?", Bing goes to the bar to refill his glass, which he does, and them he goes to the front of the bar and Frank goes behind the bar and refills his glass, and then Bing picks up the glass Frank had been drinking from and Frank picks up the glass Bing has been drinking from. They march out of the room never consuming anything from the glasses and return from off camera with empty glasses which they then refill. Very trivial, but something I had never taken notice of before.

My something rediscovered was the song, "Our Big Love Scene", from the film, *Going Hollywood*. I understand that "Temptation" is the definitive song from that film, but "Our Big Love Scene" is not too far behind it. A really driving song that Bing gets to belt out and raise emotions at a critical point in the film.

When can we do this again?"

Well said, Jim!

USA & Canadian Radio

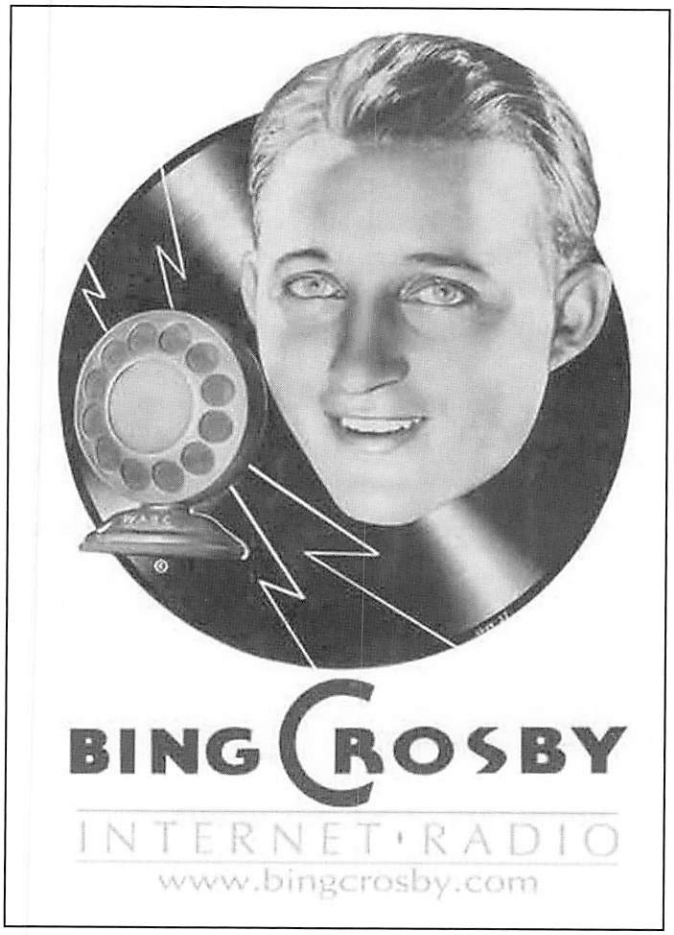
Crosby Internet Radio has continued 24/7 and I have been particularly attracted to the 15-minute Bing Crosby Shows from 1954-1956. It was interesting to see how Bing's latest records were carefully slotted into the shows with a gentle comment from him about them being available from Decca, Capitol or Verve. He pushed the songs from his new albums quite hard and also single releases such as "Ol' Man River" (17 times), "Now You Has Jazz" (18 times in a 3-month period) and "True Love" (14 times). I have been updating the songs from the series on the BING magazine web site in the *Bing on Radio* section if you want more information.

Also I have been surprised by the number of contributions made to the 15-minute show by Lindsay Crosby and to date he has sung 21 different songs in a total of 58 appearances on the shows as well as a few duets with his Dad. I should really like to praise Lindsay's singing but I have to admit that he would probably not have been very successful as a solo singer on the evidence of most of these performances, pleasant as they are.

Apart from the 15-minute programs, we have had plenty of KMH, Philco, Chesterfield and GE shows plus other items such as Command Performance, Mail Call and the BBC and KXL series about Bing.

The various commercials are very enticing and persuasive of course and I am now wondering whether to take up smoking and if I do should I choose Chesterfield (mildness and no unpleasant after-taste) or Philip Morris (the gentle pleasure, the fresh unfiltered flavor)? A tricky decision.

Make a point of listening to Crosby Internet Radio whenever you can. Go to http://bingcrosby.com/crosby-internet-radio or use the link in the News section of the BING magazine web site



Arne Fogel's weekly radio program "The Bing Shift" is still being broadcast on Sundays at 8 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota. It can be accessed on demand at *http://kbem.podbean.com/?s=The+Bing+Shift* and it's always enjoyable. Frans van der Kolff writing on the Crosby Fan World site in October said:

> *...Arne Fogel puts together and hosts a great Crosby show and I was, to be honest, surprised that his 'Bing Shift' hasn't gained more attention here in the forum. In my opinion it certainly deserves it! Many of the shows have a theme which fills about half the show; the second part consists of a 'Crosby cavalcade' as Arne Fogel himself calls it, a cleverly combined series of Crosby songs, many of which you may not have heard in a long time - unless you listen to Bing 24/7! Why not give it a listen?*

Jack Boyle's BING *for the SEASONS* show continues to grow in popularity. His July show had a number of patriotic songs such as "Song of Freedom", "This Is a Great Country" and "What's More American". In August, Jack highlighted Bing's French connection with "A Musical Bouquet for France" with many of the songs from "Le Bing" plus other such as "C'est Si Bon" (with Jane Morgan), "The Poor People of Paris" (with Rosie) and a TV medley with Maurice Chevalier. September brought a return to songs from south of the

Mason-Dixon line and the October show was titled "Music, Magic and Moonlight". This featured songs like "The Moon Was Yellow", "Moonlight Bay" and "In the Evening by the Moonlight" (with Al Jolson).

Well done, Jack! The program now airs twice monthly, the first Sunday of the month at 7 pm, with an Encore Presentation on the third Sunday of the month at 9 am ET on Hudson Valley Public Radio's JAZZ FM (and on the Internet at HVPR.ORG).

Greg Van Beek's weekly radio series Nostalgia Radio Time on 1420 AM WJUB has continued its long run on Saturday nights starting at 9 pm (CST) / 10 pm (ET). Greg always has a "Bing Sings" segment in the hour-long program. He remembered Bing for the 39th anniversary of his death on October 15 with an hour of airchecks culled from Bing's Kraft Music Hall broadcasts, circa 1937-43. Songs such as "One Song", "You're the Only Star in My Blue Heaven", "I Thought About You" and "I'll Be with You in Apple Blossom Time" were heard. Two weeks later Halloween was marked with "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow".

You can catch Greg online at the www.1420thebreeze.com site or you can listen to the previous two weeks shows by going to the website and clicking on the 'audio archives' link.

And don't forget **Rich Conaty's** long-running "The Big Broadcast" show from New York on WFUV which puts a musical spotlight on the classic sounds of the 1920s and '30s which of course includes Bing. It's heard on Sunday nights from 8pm-Midnight (ET) and you can listen again through the WFUV archives on the Internet.

TV highlights - UK

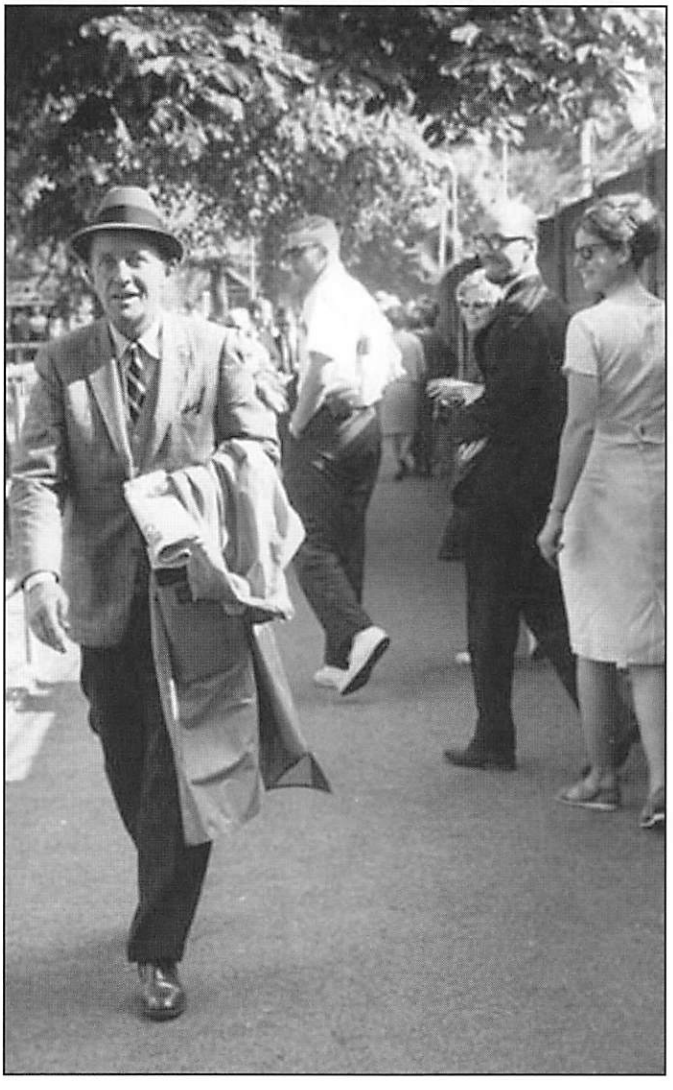
The highlight has undoubtedly been the *Talking Pictures* episode on BBC2 on August 27 looking at Bing's career with a focus on his film work. The series is narrated by Sylvia Syms and uses BBC interview material with the star in question. Running for 40 minutes, we were given a quick overview of Bing's career before seeing a clip from the *Picture Parade* programme of April, 3, 1962. This had been recorded in advance on October 19, 1961 to be used as a promo for *The Road to Hong Kong* when it was released. Bob Hope and Bing talked about the film before singing "Teamwork" accompanied by the Bill McGuffie Quartet. Your editor found some details about the programme in the BBC's Written Archive Centre which indicated that Bing was paid a nominal fee of ten guineas (which was passed on to a charity) plus five guineas for each repeat. Cecil Madden, a senior BBC executive, sent an internal memo to his staff.

> *Many congratulations on achieving such an exciting special programme with Hope and Crosby for "Picture Parade", and at no cost for fees. To have them working a specially written script by (Dennis) Goodwin and singing together in our studios was an achievement we shall long remember. I will do my best to get the cover of the Radio Times with the special photographs when you use it. Crosby feeling ill, and the worry of a substantial informal audience all added to a difficult day which was splendidly surmounted by all. Well done!*

Not sure what ailed Bing but he did have a major operation to remove kidney stones less than three months later.

Next, we saw a lengthy extract from Bing's 1972 appearance on the Parkinson Show. Watching the pipe-smoking Mr. Crosby answering Parky's questions I could not help but admire his exceptional skill as a raconteur.

An interview with Joan Bakewell (now Baroness Bakewell!) for BBC2's *Late Night Line-Up* was our next treat. This was recorded at the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Championships on June 30, 1965 and the old groaner was his usual charming self as he answered the queries from Ms. Bakewell who probably did not know too much about her interviewee. Bing talked about his sitcom series which was then being shown on BBC2 and mentioned that he was about to jet off to film the part of Doc Boone in *Stagecoach*.



Bing at Wimbledon in 1965

An extract from the 1975 Parkinson Show followed and Bing looked younger and fitter than he had on the 1972 programme as he talked about the great days of Hollywood.

This segued into what came to be known as the Palladium Bar interview. Vincent Hanna met Bing at the Palladium on September 21, 1977 to record an interview for the BBCs *Tonight* show and asked direct questions about Bing's wealth querying why he still bothered to work. The cap-wearing Bing, with a muffler around his neck, explained that he could never see himself retiring completely as he still liked to be in action and to see if there was an audience for him. Hanna said that Crosby surely had no need for money anymore but Bing countered by saying that he needed some income as he had all sorts of obligations and he was always two years behind with his taxes. He needed an income to keep things on the status quo.

In response to Hanna's direct question "How rich are you" Bing said that he really couldn't say as it was always difficult to value real estate. He indicated that Bob Hope was far richer than him. They also discussed the Road films and the possibility of another in the series being made. Bing said that a synopsis had been prepared and the writers were trying to fix it up with more lunacy. The nominal fee of £40 was paid to Bing's executor.

The final clip was Bing singing a parody of "Hello Dolly" which he called "Hello Parky" on the 1975 Parkinson Show. This was an excellent little programme which I am sure will have pleased everyone who saw it.

Other Crosby items seen since our last issue was prepared were:

Bilko Presents Bing Crosby	ForcesTV
Discovering: Bing Crosby	SkyArts
Duets: The Andy Williams Show	BBC4
Let's Make Love	SkyDramaRom
Road to Bali	ShowBizTV
Stagecoach	Film4
That's Entertainment	BBC2
That's Entertainment II	BBC2
The Adventures of Ichabod & Mr Toad	Disney Movies
The Country Girl	Sky DramaRom

The film *Two Tickets to Broadway* (1951) starring Tony Martin, Janet Leigh and Gloria DeHaven was shown on BBC2 in August and it is of interest to us because Bob Crosby sings "Let's Make Comparisons" in it. This is a good-natured jibe at a dummy dressed like Bing. Very amusing.

UK radio

The National Presenters

Songs played on BBC Radio2 of which we were aware over the last four months were:

Desmond Carrington: I've a Shooting Box in Scotland (July 8) – Fancy Meeting You Here (July 8) – Something Sort of Grandish (July 29) – The Pessimistic Character (Aug. 12) – In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening (Aug. 19) – They Didn't Believe Me (Sept. 9) - Everything Old Is New Again (Sept. 16)

Desmond, who is 90 years of age, has now left BBC Radio 2, bringing his 70-year career to a close. He hosted his final episode of *The Music Goes Round* on Friday 28 October. He commented: "I wasn't too well after my 90th birthday and it has been a bit difficult to carry on. So reluctantly, but I hope sensibly, I'm going to hang up my headphones at the end of October and say 'enough is enough.'"

His Friday night show usually had an audience of about 700,000 and we shall miss him. I sent him an email thanking him for playing Mr. Crosby so frequently on his BBC radio show over the last 36 years and I had a nice reply.

Clare Teal: Nice Work If You Can Get It (July 3) – They All Laughed (Aug.21)

Elaine Paige: True Love (July 17) – Talk to the Animals (Oct. 2)

Don Black: There's Nothing That I Haven't Sung About (Sept. 4)

Paul Gambaccini with America's Greatest Hits: I'll Be Seeing You (July 2)

After Midnight with Alex Lester: Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive (Aug. 12)

Paul O'Grady: Snuggled on Your Shoulder (Aug. 7) – Swinging on a Star (Len Goodman sitting in - Sept. 4)

Liza Tarbuck: Moonlight Becomes You (Oct. 29)

Thank You for Being My Friend – a Tribute to Terry Wogan – Straight down the Middle (Sept. 26) – True Love (Sept. 26)

The Chris Evans Breakfast Show: White Christmas (Oct. 18)

The local radio presenters

Occasionally a member will query why we have this section and also why several of us send off requests to radio presenters. The club also supplies CDs to selected presenters too on occasion. The ICC's mission is "To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations" and having requests played on the radio is a small contribution to this. Someone may hear a Crosby song and then look to buy a CD or download a track and a fan may be born. I became a Crosby fan by hearing him on Radio Luxembourg.

We do not often hear Al Jolson or Al Bowlly on the radio for example so often these days and we must not let Der Bingle start to fade from memory too. The local presenters are happy to have requests from Crosby fans and many have quite large listening audiences. I encourage you all to play your part.

It follows therefore that it is only right to recognise those presenters who consistently play our man.

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria (and on the

Internet at www.bbc.co.uk/radiocumbria) is a huge Crosby supporter and has again used plenty of Der Bingle's songs in response to requests made on her Saturday night shows (10pm-midnight). In the 4-month period covered by this issue, Anne played no less than 37 songs by Mr. Crosby including rarer items such as "Blue Shadows on the Trail", "New Vienna Woods", "The Next Time It Happens" and "If There's Anybody Here". Anne also gave a nice plug for Jason Liddiard's Crosby meeting which was mentioned earlier in this issue. She commented recently "Requests are beginning to fall back a little – but, it varies."

Anne continues to welcome requests by email to *anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk* so email her if you want to keep hearing Bing on the radio. She plays at least one for me every month. There's a "Listen again" facility for up to 28 days after the initial broadcast.

Bill Rennells ***Harmony Night*** show on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet always has plenty of Crosby. It's a three-hour broadcast starting at 10 p.m. on Sunday evenings and he too has a "Listen Again" option. At short notice on one Sunday evening in July, I was able to help Bill track down a Crosby request when he had mislaid the paperwork. From the scant information he had remembered I was able to trace the song and another Crosby track reached the airwaves.

In the 4-month period, Bill played at least 16 Crosby classics with "Dancing in the Dark", "Maria Bonita" and "Indian Summer" being typical examples of those employed. Twelve of those tracks resulted from requests by Stan White, Ian Lawrence and me. Please join in and email Bill with your Bing requests to *bill.rennells@bbc.co.uk* so that we keep Bing's name to the fore in the South East of England.

The Late Paul Barnes, the two-hour show hosted by Paul Barnes over seven BBC local radio stations and on the Internet starting at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights has a regularly monthly segment featuring the 2013 Crosby calendar (the last one we issued). He plays the calendar song each time and usually adds another Crosby song or two on each occasion.

In July, Barnsy gave the Boss (as he calls him) an extended play using four songs including "One More Dream" from the JSP CD "Here's Bing Crosby" which Stan White had supplied to him. Time pressures meant that Paul could only play "Tomorrow's My Lucky Day" in conjunction with the August calendar but in September and October he made up for this by playing three tracks each time. Nice to hear tracks such as "Dolores", "September in the Rain" and even "Pinetop's Boogie Woogie"!

We had rather lost track of BBC Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** in recent months but contact has now been made again. His programme of big band swing and balladeers goes out each Sunday afternoon and he is another presenter who receives Crosby CDs via Stan White. I emailed him with a request and got a nice mention on his show. Songs heard include "Because My Baby Don't Mean 'Maybe' Now", "Smarty" and "Maria Bonita" (requested by Stan White). Wherever you are in the world, please email Howard with a Crosby request at *howard.leader@bbc.co.uk.* There is a "Listen Again" option.

I've had a look at the BBC website to see what other Crosby songs have been played in the last four months. Although not all the presenters use the site, the following have been shown as being played on the local BBC radio stations. Most of these shows have a "listen again" facility.

Beverley Humphreys presents *Beverley's World of Music*: (BBC Radio Wales) – Straight Down the Middle (Aug. 21) – Dear Hearts and Gentle People (Oct. 2) – True Love (Oct. 9)
Chris Needs: (BBC Radio Wales) – Swinging on a Star (Aug. 10) – Peace on Earth / Little Drummer Boy (Sept. 16)
David Allen: (BBC Radio Surrey) – Around the World (Aug. 20) – Thanks for the Memory (Sept. 10) – But Not for Me (Sept. 17) – Only Forever (Oct. 1) - Straight Down the Middle (Oct. 15)
Get It On... with Bryan Burnett: (Radio Scotland) - Now You Has Jazz (Oct. 12)
Gideon Coe: (BBC Radio 6) – Gone Fishin' (Sept. 22)
Graham Dene: (BBC Surrey) – I Love You, Samantha (July 31) – Little One (July 31)
Graham Pass: (BBC Wiltshire) – Straight Down the Middle (July 10) – We're in the Money (Sept. 4)
Money for Nothing: (Radio Wales) - Straight Down the Middle (Sept. 10)
Neil Foster: (BBC Radio York) – Well Did You Evah? (July 17) – But Beautiful (Aug. 7) – True Love (Aug. 14) – Well, Did You Evah! (Sept. 11) – Busy Doing Nothing (Sept. 25) - Well, Did You Evah! (Oct. 23)
Roy Noble: (BBC Radio Wales) – Oh, What A Beautiful Mornin' (July17) – A Fella with an Umbrella (Oct. 16)
Songbook with Eamon Friel: (BBC Radio Ulster) – You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby (Aug. 25)
Sunday Club with John Bennett: (Radio Ulster) – Now You Has Jazz (July 24) – Far Away Places (Sept. 25) – McNamara's Band (Oct. 30)
Unforgettable with Bob Roberts: (Radio Solent) – Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? (Oct. 9) – Swinging on a Star (Oct. 23) – Straight Down the Middle (Oct. 30)
Unforgettable with Gerald Jackson: (BBC Radio Lancashire) – Moonlight Becomes You (Sept. 4) – You're Getting to Be a Habit with Me (Sept. 4) – The Way We Were (Sept. 25) – Red Sails in the Sunset (Oct. 16)

Interesting that five of the presenters played "Straight Down the Middle"!

Angel Radio station in Havant, Hampshire (www.angelradio.co.uk) has continued to broadcast a Bing radio show on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 a.m.

Australia

Graham Pascoe tells us that *Going Hollywood* was shown on TCM in June and in October the same channel showed *High Society* but its listing in *The Australian* newspaper just credited the stars as Grace Kelly and Frank Sinatra!

John Funnell's "I've Heard That Song Before" from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. every Wednesday on WNY FM 88.9 features Hollywood and Broadway favourites. It includes Bing every week and the show can be heard online at www.wynfm.org.au/. Previous shows can be accessed too.

The Golden Days community radio station on 95.7 FM in Victoria continues to have a half-hour programme at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday afternoons called "On Air with Bing" which broadcasts a complete Bing Crosby radio show each week. This is presented by Bob Horsfall.

Other radio programmes featuring our man are Peter O'Brien's "Music Showcase" on Eastern FM 98.1 (Mondays 12 noon to 2 p.m.) Loris Young's show on 3WBC FM 94.1 (Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.) has plenty of Crosby too.

Malcolm Macfarlane **macwilmslo@aol.com**

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Noel Neill, the first actress to play Superman's female associate Lois Lane onscreen, died on July 3 at the age of 95. Born in Minneapolis in 1920, she originally thought of becoming a real journalist like her newspaper editor father before playing one onscreen. She modeled and sang while in her teens, then wrote for "Women's Wear Daily" before moving into acting and singing. Soon after moving to Los Angeles, Bing discovered her in 1938 when she was singing with the El Chancellor Band at the Hotel Del Mar in Del Mar, California. But she only performed at the hotel for a few days. On the evening of one of her first nights there, Bing, whose Del Mar Turf Club was nearby, watched her perform. He was so taken with her voice, her style and her infectious smile that he hired both Noel and the band to perform at the Turf Club the very next night. She successfully performed there on weekends, Friday through Sunday, for two seasons, the summers of 1938 and 1939.

She later signed for Paramount and appeared in films including *Here Comes the Waves* and *Duffy's Tavern* with Bing and then appeared in *Music Man* (1948) and in a series of film and TV Westerns with directors including Vincent Minnelli, Cecil B. DeMille and Hal Roach. Her first appearance as Lois Lane was in the 1948 movie serial "Superman," which showed her talent for humor. She then appeared in the sequel "Atom Man vs Superman" (1950). The 1953-1958 television series "Adventures of Superman," starring George Reeves, gave her a longtime role as the intrepid reporter, and she said later in interviews that she simply played herself. She returned several times to appear in Superman films — playing Lois Lane's mother in the 1978 Christopher Reeve *Superman*, appearing in the "Superboy" series and in the Brandon Routh-starrer 2006 *Superman Returns*. Neill, who appeared in more than 40 films, retired after the "Adventures of Superman" TV series ended in 1958 but was a familiar face at conventions and signings and returned for small roles in later Superman films.

Bing and Noel at Del Mar in 1938

Greg Van Beek met her at a convention in 2005 and she told Greg about her time at Del Mar.

> "Bing was very nice to me. I remember he was not too tall or too good-looking, but he was always very cordial and upbeat. I didn't see him every night I worked because the place was always so packed with people coming for first the dinner shows, then dancing. I do recall that once I wasn't feeling too well – it was earlier in the afternoon long before the shows – and Bing heard about it. He came up to me and said he was going to have someone drive me to the beach house that he had nearby, and that his wife Dixie would fix me something. Well, we arrived, and obviously he had called her because she knew I was coming and greeted me so warmly. She had the maid

make me some herbal tea. We spent the rest of the afternoon chatting on her tennis court, where she was giving diction lessons to her twin boys who had speech problems. She was a wonderful person who was very kind and caring. I saw her a few times after that and she was always very kind to me."

On her first day on the Paramount lot, Noel bumped into Bing, having not seen him for a few years. As she described it to Greg:

"I had just arrived on the lot and was on my way to the set when I heard someone behind me singing the Christmas tune "The First Noel". I turned around and there was Bing, as happy as can be, riding a bicycle across the lot. He asked if everything was going well for me and I replied that it was. Then he said 'If anyone ever gives you any trouble, just let me or my brother Everett know, and we'll take care of it.' Bing was so protective of me and I knew that his words were genuine. I never needed his help, but it was comforting to know that he was there for me if I needed him."

Gloria DeHaven, passed away on July 30 at the age of 91. She was a popular singer and actress who performed in many of Hollywood's most glamorous musicals of the 1940s and 50s. Gloria was a cherished but minor member of a glittering roster that made the MGM musical into one of the glories of Hollywood in the 1940s and 50s. Attractive, with a pleasant singing voice, DeHaven remained the studio's favorite ingénue for more than a decade, almost her entire screen career.

Besides being frequently called upon to play the star's sister, DeHaven had the distinction of being the first woman to kiss Frank Sinatra on screen which, according to one critic, "sent thousands of bobbysoxers into swoons". It happened in *Step Lively* (1944), where DeHaven played a showgirl who falls for Sinatra's shy singer-playwright.

With Frank Sinatra in *Step Lively*.

Before singing on screen, DeHaven had made a name as a vocalist from the age of 14 with the Muzzy Marcellino, Bob Crosby and Jan Savitt big bands. In 1943, MGM signed DeHaven and June Allyson (another band singer), giving them a "speciality number" in the all-star *Thousands Cheer*, in which they sweetly sang "In a Little Spanish Town". In the same year, Allyson and DeHaven were together again as college kids in *Best Foot Forward*, with the latter having some of the wittiest lines. Playing sisters, June and Gloria then took the title parts, with Van Johnson, in *Two Girls and a Sailor* (1944). As producer George Murphy's sister in *Broadway Rhythm* (1944), she sang "Pretty Baby" delightfully with the old-timer Charles Winninger.

It was in 1944 that she first performed with Bing when she was a guest on the Kraft Music Hall of January 27 singing "I've Got a Crush on You". She also appeared with Mr. Crosby on a GI Journal Show of February 18, 1944 and a Command Performance Show (#160) on February 1, 1945. Her only hit record was "Because of You" with Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians in 1951 which reached the No. 11 position in the Billboard charts.

Arguably her best film was *Summer Holiday* (1948) in which she played Mickey Rooney's well-scrubbed girlfriend Muriel.

DeHaven left MGM after playing farmer Judy Garland's stage-struck sister in *Summer Stock* (1950), moving on to 20th Century Fox, where she was cast as June Haver's sister in *I'll Get By* (1950), and in *Down Among the Sheltering Palms* (1953), on a Pacific island, giving a spirited rendition of "All of Me".

But with the demise of the classic Hollywood musical, DeHaven left films in 1955 for Broadway, where she and Ricardo Montalban, as Parisian dance-hall girl and sewer worker respectively, led a huge cast in *Seventh Heaven*, an ill-fated musical version (it ran for six performances) of the 1927 Janet Gaynor silent film classic. After retiring for a number of years, she guested in dozens of TV series and soap operas, but her return to films was rather inglorious, particularly in an ultra-cheap horror flick aptly titled *Bog*, made in 1978 but released in the US in 1984, though she showed some versatility in a double role.

In 1989, she relaunched her career as a cabaret singer at the Rainbow & Stars in New York, where she sang songs from her Hollywood days and talked of her vaudevillian parents. She also appeared in a show called Palm Beach Follies.

DeHaven was married four times. Her first husband was John Payne, another star of the golden era of film musicals; her second the real estate developer, Martin Kimmel; and her third Richard Fincher, whom she divorced in 1963, remarried in 1965 and divorced again in 1969.

Arnold Palmer, viewed as one of the greatest

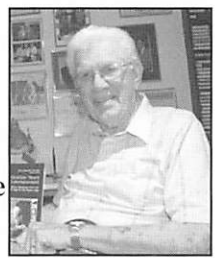
and most influential players in the history of golf, died at the age of 87 on September 25. In a career that spanned more than six decades, he won 62 PGA Tour titles from 1955 to 1973, placing him at that time behind only Sam Snead and Ben Hogan, and he is still fifth on the Tour's all-time victory list. He collected seven major titles in a six-plus-year domination, from the 1958 Masters to the 1964 Masters. He also won the PGA Tour Lifetime Achievement Award in 1998, and in 1974 was one of the 13 original inductees into the World Golf Hall of Fame. Palmer was part of "The Big Three" in golf during the 1960s, along with Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player, who are widely credited with popularizing and commercializing the sport around the world. Bing played with Arnold on several occasions. They were together on February 17, 1969 at the National Awards Dinner of the Metropolitan Golf Writers Association where Arnold received the Richardson Award and Bing was honoured with the Gold Tee Award.

Bing and Kathryn with Arnold Palmer at the National Awards Dinner.

Some years ago, ICC member Ron Field wrote to Mr. Palmer congratulating him on his 80th birthday and asking for his memories of Bing. Arnold replied saying, inter alia,

> "To answer your question about my association with Bing Crosby, it lasted for many years. I played golf with him numerous times and attended many functions with him. He was a great guy and a good friend. I really can't give you a lot of information other than the fact he enjoyed golf, did not like losing on the golf course and continued to play until his death."

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'



Gord reminds us of some of the incredible statistics of Bing's career.

The best-selling record of all time, Bing's ageless classic "White Christmas" is still the world's most popular recording. Its timeless appeal continues to gladden our hearts and preserve our Christmas memories. The film that introduced the perennial Irving Berlin ballad *Holiday Inn*, co-starring Bing and Fred Astaire was released for the holidays of 1942. Since that time, 74 years ago, Bing's name has been synonymous with the Christmas season.

However, the incredible impact he had on society and the entertainment world is seldom acknowledged by today's media. During his 50 year unparalleled career, no one would have predicted that today his name would be conspicuously missing from some lists of all-time hit makers and legendary performers.

Here are just a few unassailable Crosby facts and figures: his record sales at well over 400 million exceeded all others, past and present. He had 38 number one hits. As astonishing 396 of his records made the best seller charts; 21 sold over one million copies. His versatility was matchless – no singer ever interpreted such a wide variety of music. He pioneered popular singing and brought a refreshing individuality to songs from all over the world. He brought country and western music into the mainstream of popular music.

Bing and Ingrid Bergman with their Oscars in 1945.

In films, Bing was the only star to top the movie box

office for five consecutive years. He and Bob Hope were one of the screen's most successful comedy teams. Nominated for an Academy Award as best actor three times, he won the coveted statue for his 1944 performance in *Going My Way*. Fourteen songs that he introduced in his films were nominated for an Academy Award and four including "White Christmas", won the Oscar.

In 1954 another classic Crosby musical, filmed in Technicolor with Rosemary Clooney and Danny Kaye, took as its title, *White Christmas* and revived the time honoured song on its soundtrack.

During one of my conversations with Bing a few weeks before Christmas 1974, he reflected on the impact of his most identifiable song, "I certainly didn't think "White Christmas" was going to be such a hit. It just stepped out because it was wartime."

While on a lengthy 1944 overseas tour of military bases, Bing couldn't do a show without bringing a little bit of home to the front lines with "White Christmas". "Well, it was always a kind of a wrench for me to sing the song" he told me, "I loved it of course, but at the camps and in the field hospitals, places where spirits weren't too high, they would ask for the song – they'd demand it – and half the audience would be in tears. It was a rather lugubrious atmosphere that it created, which you can understand because of its connotation of home and Christmas. It was a rather sorrowing experience to have to sing it for these men and women when it made them feel sad. But I guess in retrospect that it was a glad kind of sadness."

No one perpetuated the magic, the mystique, the reverence and the gaiety of the Yuletide like Bing. During the dark days of World War II allied servicemen affectionately called him "Santa Claus without Whiskers", for he was the embodiment of the Christmas season. It is still not possible for most people to think of Christmas without thinking of Bing.

Gord Atkinson

THE WAY WE WERE

The section of the magazine where we look at what Bing was doing in years gone by.

100 YEARS AGO

In the last quarter of 1916, Harry Crosby (aged 13) entered Gonzaga High School as a commuter. The subjects studied were Latin (6 hours a week) - Ancient History - Religious Instruction - English - Elementary Algebra and Elocution. He was elected as Sergeant-At-Arms. Harry also became an altar boy at St. Aloysius and he had to attend the service at 6:30 a.m. each day during every third week. This continued throughout his time at Gonzaga High School. On November 3, he read his own original composition at the First Year High Class Specimen of Work.

75 YEARS AGO

Bing had sailed from New York on the Moore McCormack liner S. S. Argentina en route to South America at the end of August 1941. Dixie Lee had not accompanied him and on September 7 she wrote to him:

> Bing Darling,
> As usual this is about the third letter I've attempted and torn up but this one goes regardless.
>
> We had a very gay weekend what with David and his clowning. We went to the track party. Pat [O'Brien] put on the show as if he were broadcasting to the S. S. Argentina. Everyone really missed you. Sunday nite they started playing your records. That was the last straw. I don't know why but I miss you more this time than I ever have before. When I wake up at nite and realize how far away you are my heart goes right to my toes. You better have a good time 'cause this is the last time you go without me even if I have to walk around golf courses from morning 'til nite....

After a brief stay in Barbados, the ship arrived in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil on September 10. Bing took the opportunity to visit the Casino Copacabana and where he met Ethel Smith, the organist with whom he later recorded.

> The owner of the Casino, with the help of the Brazilian first lady (Mrs. Getulio Vargas), asked him to go to Rio by car and perform there one night for some kind of social benefit. Bing came, drank, gambled, and "somewhat drunk" sang 'It's Easy to Remember', 'Please' and 'Pennies from Heaven'.
> (Ruy Castro, writing in *Carmen: Uma Biografia*, a biography written in Portuguese about Carmen Miranda)

On September 12, the liner put in at Santos, Brazil and Bing disembarked and visited Sao Paulo. The next port of call was Montevideo in Uruguay and then, in the early afternoon of September 16, Bing arrived at Buenos Aires in Argentina on the S. S. Argentina for an extended stay. Whilst in Argentina, he bought a part interest in a horse farm and sometime during his stay, he went to the Cafe de Los Inmortales in Buenos Aires. Also he visited a cattle ranch at Corrientes (about 1000 miles inland) which he was said to own jointly with three others.

Bing telephoned Dixie on their wedding anniversary but the phone connection was poor, leading Dixie to write to her husband.

> Angel -
>
> You wanted a note at Rio so here it is. I can't begin to tell you what's in my heart but I will when you get home. I was so glad you didn't laugh at me when I told

you about the wedding ring. I don't care if you ever wear it as long as you carry it around. It was the only thing I could think of that you didn't have and besides I'm feeling very sentimental these days. I just received the most gorgeous flowers from Julie and an invitation from Mercer to go to Ciro's which I refused. I've decided it's no fun having an anniversary without you.

I'm sorry our connection was so bad this morning but I love you with all my heart and you must know it...

On October 2, El Bingo broadcast from Buenos Aires for Radio El Mundo, speaking in Spanish on the show. Bing's fee went to a children's charity. The following day, he sailed on the America Republics liner "S. S. Brazil." The ship was scheduled to take sixteen days to get to New York sailing via Santos, Rio de Janeiro, and Trinidad. Bing sang for the Brazilian Red Cross in Rio de Janeiro on the return trip. On October 20, Bing duly arrived back in New York and said that during his trip he had done two shows on the ship for the crew. Dixie had flown to New York to meet him.

Before leaving New York, Bing made records of two songs he had never heard before ("Shepherd Serenade" and "Do You Care?") with Harry Sosnik and his Orchestra. He entered the studio at 9:00 a.m. and left at 9:45 a.m. "Shepherd Serenade" reached the No. 4 spot in the *Billboard* list and spent nine weeks in the charts.

Still in New York, Mr. Crosby was received by the Duke and Duchess of Windsor who were visiting the city.

Bing and Dixie arrived back at Pasadena on October 30 on the Santa Fe Super Chief and were met by their four children. Later that day he went to the NBC studios to rehearse and then broadcast his Kraft Music Hall show. The dispute by the National Broadcasters' Association with ASCAP had ended as ASCAP had agreed to much lower fees and this gave Bing more flexibility in selecting songs for his radio shows. It was the first time that he had been free to sing 'Blue of the Night" since December 28, 1940 because of the dispute. He appeared weekly on KMH until February 5, and the audience share for the season was 21.1, which put the show in twelfth place in the Hooper ratings. Edgar Bergen was top with 35.2. Victor Borge made his debut on December 4. Guests included Joe DiMaggio, Humphrey Bogart, Wingy Manone, Walter Huston, Paul Robeson, George Murphy and Frank McHugh.

On November 1, Bing took part in a sponsored broadcast *Silver Anniversary of the Blues* on the Mutual Broadcasting System originating from the Don Lee Studios to promote his film *Birth of the Blues*. Then it was back to Paramount to film *Holiday Inn* with Fred Astaire, Marjorie Reynolds, and Virginia Dale. Bing sang "White Christmas" for the first time.

Holiday Inn was one of the biggest musical setups of those times and it proved a top grossing picture. (Well, natch, with the great Crosby in it.) I had a lot of numbers and several interesting dance bits with "Cros." He surprised me. Having heard that he didn't like to rehearse much, I was amazed when he showed up in practice clothes to rehearse our first song and dance, "I'll Capture Her Heart."

Mark Sandrich wanted two comparatively unknown girls to work opposite Cros and me. We were fortunate in getting Marjorie Reynolds and Virginia Dale. (Fred Astaire, writing in his book *Steps in Time*, page 249)

Birth of the Blues was released nationwide on November 7 with the New York premiere taking place on December 9.

...as a series of illustrated jam sessions and nifty presentations of songs and jokes it is as pleasant an hour-and-a-half killer as the musically inclined could wish. Not only does feckless Bing Crosby play the clarinetist in his best unpremeditated vein, but he also has Mary Martin, Brian Donlevy, Eddie (Rochester) Anderson and Jack Teagarden with his orchestra to abet him. And although they give the impression of improvising, more or less, as they go, Director Victor Schertzinger has given to their sauntering a very smooth, easy-going pace.

. . . For sweet and fancy singing that makes your muscles twitch, there is Mr. Crosby and Miss Martin doing truly delightful things with "Wait Till the Sun Shines, Nellie" and a new number, "The Waiter, the Porter and the Upstairs Maid." And for dipping deep on the low chords, you can't ask for anything more than Mr. Crosby's 'Melancholy Baby' and those mournful 'St. Louis Blues,' sung by one Ruby Elzy, with the Teagarden band moaning behind.

Obviously, this little picture is not the ultimate saga of early jazz. But it begins to perceive the possibilities. As the "cats" say, it takes more than it leaves.

(Bosley Crowther, *New York Times*, December 11, 1941)

Japanese planes attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7 and within days Bing and his sons were selling war bonds at Defense House in Pershing Square. Los Angeles. On Christmas Day, Bing sang "White Christmas" for the first time on the Kraft show and he saw in the New Year at a party at Jack Benny's home in Beverly Hills. During the year, Bing had nineteen songs that became chart hits.

50 YEARS AGO

Bing and Kathryn had flown into Manchester Airport, England, on August 28, 1966 and went on to stay at the Trout Hotel in Cockermouth in Cumbria where Bing was making a salmon fishing segment for *The American Sportsman* program.

On several occasions, members of the International Crosby Circle visited Bing at the hotel and member Les Phythian recorded his thoughts on the event.

...Bing and Kathryn had a dinner engagement later,

so instead of seeing our man in his customary informal garb we were now confronted by a Mr. Crosby immaculately clothed in evening dress and looking for all the world like C. Dexter Haven straight out of the film *High Society*. His remarkably blue eyes, the colour doubtless accentuated by a deep sun-tan, are even more striking than I had anticipated - and Bing in person seemed to me decidedly taller than his screen image would lead one to expect. He was still experiencing some pain from the bursitis in his right shoulder (hardly surprising in view of all those backcasts with the salmon fly rod) but, this apart, Bing was obviously very fit and well.

With formal introductions over Mr. C sat down at a table by which we had gathered and in no time at all we were all chatting away merrily, naturally, entirely without strain. One thing's for sure - the casual charm we have always associated with Bing is part and parcel of the man himself and no mere layer of professionalism. Jack Shaw told Bing that "May I" was one of his favourite Crosby recordings and this set Mr. C off on a rapid but patently enjoyable mental excursion through the songs from *We're Not Dressing* (1934). "Some pretty good numbers in that one", opined Bing, naming "Love Thy Neighbour" and "Once in a Blue Moon". When I reminded him of "Goodnight Lovely Little Lady" he grinned and said "Sure... and, gee, I sang that one to a bear!" Then someone mentioned "The Folks Who Live on the Hill". "Did I do a recording of that?" asked Bing, with just the ghost of a smile playing around his lips, "A fine song. Let's see now, how did it go?" At this point he closed his eyes (there's a photograph I took at the precise moment which, by a lucky chance, beautifully captured the reflective mood he was in) and, having thought for a few seconds, treated us to half a chorus or so of that evergreen Jerome Kern ballad. This was really something, and proved beyond doubt that the Crosby vocal cords are still in excellent trim. Likewise his speaking voice, which has about it a marvellous depth and resonance not always adequately reproduced on record or soundtrack.
(Extract from an article by Les Phythian in BING magazine, October 1966)

Bing and Kathryn went to the races at Doncaster and then visited Stratford-on-Avon and Oxford as they drove down to Lord Egremont's home, Petworth House, West Sussex, for the weekend. Bing sent a postcard to John Scott Trotter as follows:

> This is a fabulous place, we came here as Lord Egremont's guests. His waters we fished in Cumberland and it was marvelous. It's in Sussex and is just loaded with fine furniture and Holbeins, Van Dycks, Turners and Titians. Kathryn's agape! Hearst was just kidding himself, believe me. The drive down from Cumberland, stopping of course, for the racing at Doncaster, convinced me that the English countryside is the most beautiful of all. And now Petworth! You should see our rooms. Incredible tapestries and furniture. We'll never recover.
>
> Yours, Bing

Later in September, Bing and Kathryn flew to Dublin in Ireland where Bing recorded the television show *A Little Bit of Irish* which was produced by his friend George O'Reilly.

Bing and Kathryn film a scene for *A Little Bit of Irish*.

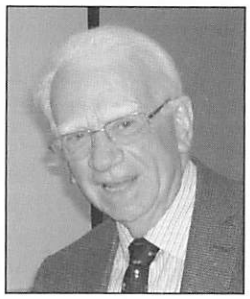
Next it was off to Scotland for golf at Gleneagles and then to Vancouver in Canada for more golf. Soon he was back at work taping Hollywood Palace shows and a special with Bob Hope which was broadcast on November 16.

> Time has not withered the charm of the pairing of Bob Hope and Bing Crosby and as a result this show was an unalloyed delight. . . There were two major sketches on the show, both of them excellent. The first was a wacky skit with Hope as a rich Texan and Crosby as a snooty Englishman, both of them with horses in a race. The two began by betting their vast holdings against one another in the race and the scene ended in a comically bizarre courtroom scene. In the other big sketch - a comic takeoff on 'The Fantastic Voyage' - Hope and Crosby were miniaturized to delve into Jackie Gleason's stomach to remove an impacted shot glass. The gastric interior set was superb and the pair utilized the gag potential of the situation to the hilt. As a closer, Hope and Crosby paraded an octet of up-and-coming film starlets across the stage with a brief stop at the microphone. They were all pretty, but were generally at a loss as straight-women to the stars' razor-sharp gagology.
> (*Variety*, November 23, 1966)

In November, Bing was in Baja California hunting black brant in remote Magdalena Bay. And then it was back to Hollywood to tape the *Hollywood Palace* Christmas Show which was shown on December 24. Bing's young children took part for the first time as did Kathryn.

KEEPING TRACK

Richard Baker looks for new releases unsuccessfully!



COMPACT DISCS

First I'll cover the bad news. As reported elsewhere in this issue, John McNicholas has decided that he can no longer continue to maintain stocks of his Jonzo series "The Chronological Bing Crosby", and this source of supply is now closed. The Crosby community owe a lot to John and the team which he led in producing the long run of records that allowed us to enjoy almost all of Bing's studio recordings from 1926 to 1950 in an unbroken sequence in good quality sound. The good news for the short term is that stocks of CDs seem to have been acquired by a concern which is offering them on eBay both in the US and UK at $3:65 and £2:99, plus postage, though the listing is not complete, covering little more than half of the series. Just search on "The Chronological Bing Crosby", but even as I write I see that a couple of examples are noted as having only one left. For those who have missed out on any I suggest urgent action is needed.

At the time of writing BingCrosby.com are offering many of the CDs and DVDs issued by them over the last few years at reduced prices. It's well worth a look if you still lack any of them but I am a little despondent about the possible implications.

Turning to the meagre number of new issues worth a mention, we have –

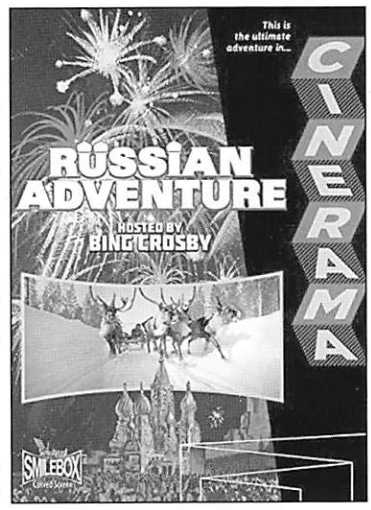
Les Poupées de Paris – Sony Masterworks Broadway – LSO-1090
US typically around $16 (but lower figures seen) UK around £ 21.
Also available to stream and download from Amazon.
2 -The Bathtub Scene.
This must hold some sort of claim to being unique because it has to be the record with the least involvement by Bing. In 1964 Sid and Marty Krofft staged a musical revue starring marionettes. It seems it caused quite a stir and a number of major stars of the time were persuaded to contribute their voices, so we have Bing and a couple of friends on one track. Bing has less than a dozen words and certainly does not sing. At least he is credited, which is more than can be said for the easily recognised friends. Other tracks include Pearl Bailey, Gene Kelly and others either singing or contributing dialogue. The extent of the involvement looks remarkably as if it is in inverse proportion to star stature. It seems odd that such major stars were under-used in this way though I imagine that some were giving friendly free support. This is one for the "completists" (or those in search of a souvenir of the show). The CD is a straight reissue of the RCA stereo LP of the time and is in good quality sound. If you are only interested in Bing's contribution (or wish to discover the identity of the friends), downloading of the single track is the way to go. Admirers of Pearl Bailey could be interested as she contributes to three tracks.

Bing Crosby –The Twelve Days of Christmas
Sounds Of Yesteryear DSOY2041 US $13 UK around £9
1. God Rest Ye Merry Gentleman / 2. Santa Claus Is Coming to Town*/ 3. It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas / 4. I'll Be Home for Christmas (If Only in My Dreams) / 5. The Twelve Days of Christmas* / 6. Here Comes Santa Claus* / 7. Medley: Deck the Halls With Boughs of Holly/Away in a Manger/I Saw Three Ships / 8. Medley: Good King Wenceslas/We Three Kings of Orient Are / 9. Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer / 10. Mele Kalikimaka* / 11. Silver Bells (with Carole Richards) / 12. Christmas in Kilarney
13 – 18. Philco Radio Time from Christmas 1946 -
13. Where the Blue of the Night - Adeste Fideles (Oh! Come All Ye Faithful) / 14. The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting On an Open Fire) / 15. Jingle Bells / 16. White Christmas / 17. The Small One (A Christmas Play) / 18. Silent Night, Holy Night.
(*= with The Andrews Sisters)
When I first saw this issue I had momentary expectations that we might have something special because it comes from a label in a group ("Submarine") that has offered much in radio material, but the first twelve tracks dashed any such thoughts as they are merely yet another compilation of the standard Decca commercial recordings. The sound quality has been bettered elsewhere and I think two of the tracks sound as if they have been taken from the artificial "stereo enhanced" versions that circulated when stereo was once demanded by many purchasers. I would not have mentioned the issue at all but for the big plus point contained in tracks 13 – 18 which make up the complete 30 minute long Philco Radio Time Christmas broadcast of 1946 (repeated in 1947). These tracks at least are in good quality and for those interested the issue is recommended for them alone. The notes show track 4 as being recorded in 1953 though it was actually 1943. Just don't play "The Small One" to younger members of the family if they are sensitive animal lovers because there could be tears over the plight of the little Mexican donkey! At least it ends positively. For the Decca studio recordings there is nothing better, in my opinion, than the MCA double CD set "The Voice of Christmas: The Complete Decca Christmas Songbook" which is still quite easy to find (though prices asked vary greatly) and Amazon offers it in both download and streaming versions.

DVD and BLU-RAY

Cinerama's Russian Adventure (Blu-ray/DVD Dual Format Edition)

FlickerAlley US Around $40. Surround sound. Two discs with much bonus material. Scheduled for release in November.



Many members will know that Bing narrated this 1966 travelogue. The early Cinerama films had three film strips shown simultaneously and which suffered a little at the "joins". This film benefited from improved technology but still had a massive curved surround screen. However it was not too successful with the public at the time, possibly because of the strained relationship between the then USSR and the west. I believe this is the first issue on DVD or Blu-ray, and the trailer available on the internet looks pretty impressive with some spectacular scenes. The trailer I have seen shows a very narrow image in the centre, widening at extreme left and right, with the black strips usual in extra widescreen films shown on TV above and below. This gives a simulation of the wraparound of the original. Is your home screen large enough to benefit?

The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson: The Vault Series

I quote from the publicity material - " - - delivers some of the best complete episodes from Johnny's reign, plus bonus material, in single discs ($14.95), and 3-DVD ($39.95), 6-DVD ($59.95), and 12-DVD sets ($99.95). Each DVD features two episodes chosen out of the 4,000 total that Johnny oversaw."

I have been sent links to the site, which offers large numbers of DVDs in the various packages noted above. One of the headlines for the series gives prominent mention of Bing, and I know that he appeared on the show on 15th October 1975, 5th March 1976 and possibly 10th December 1976. For anyone who is interested I suggest careful exploration of the site at https://www.johnnycarson.com/ but I am afraid that I have been unable to establish with any certainty which of the various packages might be said with certainty to contain the Crosby items. If anyone can assist please let me know.

High Society on Blu-ray

Screen ratio 16:9 Mono sound.

Amazon.com are listing *High Society* in Blu-ray in a Spanish version as "Alta Sociedad" for $29.65. It contains soundtracks in both English and dubbed Spanish. The regional coding is stated by Amazon to be A, B and C which I doubt because the rear cover of which they have an illustration, suggests otherwise. I hope that a release for other regions cannot be far behind. However the Blu-ray Consortium website is silent on the topic.

THE INTERNET

Reports in the UK state that Sony and UMG are to combine forces to produce an online music streaming service under the "Now That's What I Call Music" brand at £4:99 a month which they believe will bridge the gap between free services financed by advertising and premium services which are priced around £9:99. Their website states "Although the app is limited to the UK, this may change in the near future". The labels known to us as Decca and MCA in the past are of course now with the UMG group. There is, though, an implication that the service might be confined to popular current hits.

Seen on eBay (UK) was a 33 rpm 10 inch record with Bing singing "Ode to Yorkshire" made in 1976 by Bing as a gift to his hosts during a shooting holiday there. This record was covered in some detail in BING #148 on page 13. The article mentions three copies but notes included with the sale record refer to 15 pressings. The starting price quoted was £200 but there were no bids. Might some of the other pressings reside in the Crosby vaults?

Also on eBay was a hand painted poster advertising a battle of the two greatest crooners, but it's clear that the battle is via screenings of the films "Ship Ahoy" (released May 1942) and "If I Had My Way" (released April 1940) and not personal appearances, though a casual reader might think so. The stated presentation dates of Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 1st 2nd & 3rd November, place this in November 1943. The location is merely stated to be the Kenwood Theatre (possibly Ohio?) and the starting price was $6850 but there were no bids.

Yet another item on eBay – *"Bing Crosby's Custom Western Tooled Leather Golf Seat! This was the actor's walking stick and seat carried along and used during golf tournaments. Western-style custom tooled leather adjustable golf seat/walking stick. Decorated in floral tooled leather engraved, "BING" in the center. The reverse side has the basic leather look. Size: 15" x 4.5" x adjustable length."* This has been offered repetitively at the same starting price of $15,000 but there have been no bids.

Optimism still exists!

To wind up for this issue may I thank the several members who have been in contact to provide information either direct or via Malcolm. Internet searches using Bing's name do not always produce items that might be of interest (as in Les Poupées de Paris for example) and it is most helpful if members coming across such items are able to draw attention to them.

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